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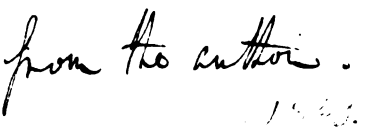

MEMORIALS OF MANY SCENES.

MEMORIALS OF MANY SCENES.

BY

Houghton (L. Barron)

RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES.

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

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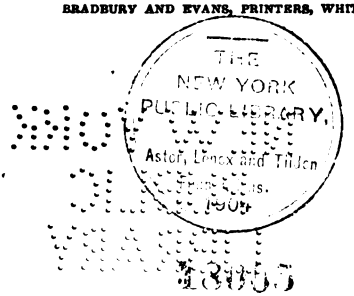

TO

CONNOP THIRLWALL,

LORD BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S,

THESE MEMORIALS OF MANY SCENES

ARE DEDICATED

BY

HIS GRATEFUL PUPIL AND ATTACHED FRIEND.

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PREFACE.

ALFRED TENNYSON, my contemporary and friend, has enjoined some brother Poet—

> "To learn to write his random rhymes
> Ere they be half-forgotten,
> Nor add and alter many times
> Till all be ripe and rotten"—

and, acting on the latter part of this advice (as I have done, perhaps too frequently, on the former), I republish with very little alteration the poems, whose composition was so pleasant a labour to me in travelling through, or sojourning in, the bright countries of the South of Europe, and which, under other titles, have already been offered to the sympathy of other wayfarers.

The "Memorials of a Tour in Greece" were published ten years ago; and thus, though chargeable with the inaccuracies of an inexperienced writer, they were so far nearer the source of the classical associations of educated youth, and so far likely to be impregnate with a purer and stronger feeling of the worth and interest of that country and its history, than

is perhaps compatible with the diversified studies and expanding objects of maturer years.

The Italian poems express a very different tone of thought, and one which a short time ago could have hoped for little sympathy in this country. Now, indeed, I may expect more fellow-worshippers in St. Peter's than in the Parthenon; and if I have since been enabled, by additional research and freer speculation, to realise a more perfect Catholicity, I can only plead the influence that the ancient centre of so much faith and so much power exercised over my imagination, and the conviction that the impression thus made was, on the whole, salutary and truthful.

The "Other Scenes" have been recorded as they presented themselves to my mind—some of them long ago—some almost yesterday; they take the low position of Occasional Poems, and can only acquire an interest from something beside and beyond themselves; in the present abundance of excellent and interesting poetry, they would hardly have been for the first time obtruded on the public; but some of them may, by this time, have found friends who would be glad to see them again.

LONDON,
July, 1844.

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE SENSE OF TRAVEL.

TO ———.

Hast thou not read the wild but all-true story
Of the brave Pilgrim and his Georgian bride,
Pietro* and Maäni, who in glory
And cloudless joy went wandering side by side?

Now by the Turcoman's ferocious hordes
Guarded, and tended with religious care,
Now proudly feasted at the imperial boards
Of Isfahan and Shiras, peerless pair!

* Pietro della Valle, il Pellegrino, commenced his strange wanderings in 1614. The chivalry of his character, his singular marriage, and the novelty of the world he opens to Europe in all truth and simplicity, make these volumes most agreeable reading.

What was to them the peril and the toil,
The shifting troubles of that novel way?
They were together, and no power could soil
The pure love-calm that at their spirits lay:—

Till envious Death forbade the further sight
Of that rare interchange of bliss and pain,
And nations lost a wonder and delight,
Which never might refresh their souls again.

But though thus late, why should'st not Thou and I,
Before our lives' short seasons downward tend,
Renew that long-extinguished memory,
My falcon-eyed, my falcon-hearted Friend?

It is a high vocation, to go out
Upon the dædal Earth, and watch the sun
Rise above unknown hills, and wide about
Strange plains extend our sight's dominion:—

Through scenes, which to the habitants of each
Are worlds distinct, as if they planets were,
And ever-varying moods of garb and speech,
To pass light-winged, and free as birds of air:—

To live whole years in some short span of days,—
To feel new wisdom falling, like a dew,
Upon our passive temples, and the maze
Of life unravel with a ready clue!

When close before us spreads some famous land,
How well we think! how faithfully we know!
Imagination lays her regal hand
On Memory's shoulder, and she dare not go :—

For then the Soul can best its ear apply,
Piercing our daily path's discordant sound,
To that low-paced, long-echoing, melody,
To which the Earth, in its pure prime, went round.

Such generous ends will surely energise
Thy flower-frail form, till it becomes so strong,
That in dark ways and under sternest skies,
Serene and fearless thou wilt move along;

And Nature's shapes and each historic place
Fresh earnest of their inner life will find,
Taking the mould of thy supernal grace,
And lucid with the light of thy clear mind.

GREECE.

"Greece and her foundations are
Built below the tide of war,
Based on the crystalline sea
Of Thought and its Eternity."—SHELLEY.

THE ELD.

"To me . . .
Pushed from his chair of regal heritage,
The Present is the vassal of the Past."—TENNYSON.

OH, blessèd, blessèd be the Eld,
Its echoes and its shades,—
The tones that from all time outswelled,
The light that never fades;—
The silver-pinion'd memories,
The symbol and the tale,—
The soul-enchasèd melodies
Of merriment or bale.

Oh, glory! that we wrestle
So valiantly with Time,
And do not alway nestle
In listlessness or crime:

We do not live and die
  Irrevocably blind,
But raise our hands and sigh
  For' the might we left behind.

Each goodly sign and mystic letter,
  That angel-haunted books unfold,—
We cherish more,—we know them better,
  When we remember they are old;
And friends, though fresh, and hale, and cheerly,
  And young, as annals hold,
Yet, if we prize them *very* dearly,
  We love to call them old.

Yon scented shrub,—I passed it by,
  The youngling of the breeze;
I sat me, sad and soberly,
  Beneath those ancient trees,
Whose branches, dight in summer pall,
  Their gloom in moaning wore;
For' they told me of the Eld and all
  The mystery of yore.

And in the gusts, I thought they pitied
  The falling of the young,—
The fair, the subtle-witted,
  Fine limb, and honeyed tongue;—

As man, from birth to funeral,
Were but a tragic mime,—
And, they the kinsman lineal
Of the good and olden prime.

I saw the hoary bulk of ocean
A' couching on the shore,
With a ripple for its motion,
And a murmur for its roar;
I gazed, but not as on the dead,
But as if Death were held
In awe, by a thing that slumberèd
In the deep and silent Eld.

The golden school of Eld is rife
With many a God-sent ray,
And jewel-gleams of perfect life,
Hereditary day!
Alas! we cannot quite awake,—
But when we *feel* we dream,
That hour, our heart is strong to shake
The falsities that seem.

For our bark is on the angle
Of a wide and bending stream,
Whose bosky banks entangle
The eye's divergent beam;—

The ridgy steeps hide in the way,
Whither the stream is quest,
As on a lake, the mirror'd day
Repeats its waveless rest.

How know we, when so clearly still,
Where its nether fountains be?
That it welleth in a viewless hill,
And passeth to the sea?
The tide beneath us,—where it welled
Dull sense regardeth not,—
But it was *once* the tide of Eld,
And we have not *all* forgot.

Great Art hath bound a diadem,
Upon his front serene,
Whose every pure and charmèd gem
Bedews him with its sheen;
And thus,—nor deem it wildly new,
Nor slur of idle tongue,—
But true, as God's own words are true,
The Eld is alway young;—

Young as the flush of all-blue light,
Or eve's imperial eyes,
And he who worshippeth aright,
Shall aye be young and wise,

And gentle as the virgin dove
That primal chaos quelled,
With Nature for his ladie-love,
The daughter of the Eld.

Sept. 20*th*, 1832.

CORFU.

"It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise."—SHELLEY.

THOU pleasant Island, whose rich garden-shores
Have had a long-lived fame of loveliness*,
Recorded in the historic song, that framed
The unknown Poet of an unknown time,
Illustrating his native Ithaca,
And all her bright society of isles,—
Most pleasant land! To us, who journeying come
From the far west, and fall upon thy charms,
Our earliest welcome to Ionian seas,
Thou art a wonder and a deep delight,
Thy usual habitants can never know.

* Σχερίη ἰφαντινή.—Odyss. vii. 79.

Thou art a portal, whence the Orient,
The long-desired, long-dreamt-of, Orient,
Opens upon us, with its stranger forms,
Outlines immense and gleaming distances,
And all the circumstance of faery-land.
Not only with a present happiness,
But taking from anticipated joys
An added sense of actual bliss, we stand
Upon thy cliffs, or tread the slopes that leave
No interval of shingle, rock, or sand,
Between their verdure and the Ocean's brow,—
Whose olive-groves (unlike the darkling growth,
That earns on western shores the traveller's scorn)
Can wear the grey that on their foliage lies,
As but the natural hoar of lengthened days,—
Making, with their thick-bossed and fissured trunks,
Bases far-spread and branches serpentine,
Sylvan cathedrals, such as in old times
Gave the first life to Gothic art, and led
Imagination so sublime a way.

Then forth advancing, to our novice eyes
How beautiful appears the concourse clad
In that which, of all garbs, may best befit
The grace and dignity of manly form:
The bright-red open vest, falling upon
The white thick-folded kirtle, and low cap

Above the high-shorn brow.
Nor less than these,
With earnest joy, and not injurious pride,
We recognise of Britain and her force
The wonted ensigns and far-known array;
And feel how now the everlasting Sea,
Leaving his old and once imperious Spouse,
To faint, in all the beauty of her tears,
On the dank footsteps of a mouldering throne,
Has taken to himself another mate,
Whom his uxorious passion has endowed,
Not only with her antique properties,
But with all other gifts and privilege,
Within the circle of his regal hand.

Now forward,—forward on a beaming path,
But be each step as fair as hope has feigned it,
For me, the memory of the little while,
That here I rested happily, within
The close-drawn pale of English sympathies,
Will bear the fruit of many an after-thought,
Bright in the dubious track of after-years.

A DREAM OF SAPPHO.

THE range of rocks which forms the "Leucadian Promontory," on one side shelving to the sea's brink and clothed with greenish heather, on the other fearfully precipitous and of the purest chalk, reminds you much more forcibly of the dread with which of old they filled the approaching mariner *, than of their anti-erotic powers of purgation. The Temple of Apollo, which stood near its extremity, seems to have had reference to both these purposes. Even when the edifice no longer remained to receive the offerings and adjurations of the trembling seamen, a record of the religion of the place was left; and, in these late days, Kendrick mentions that he saw the sailors cast obols into the sea to propitiate the present power. It is also no bad illustration of the different ways in which faith sways the minds of men, that, with regard to the more marvellous function of this sacred shore, lovers, in the cooler stage of Grecian mythology, no longer undertook the ordeal leap, but were content to court the favour of the god by the same safe method of pecuniary oblation. The origin and meaning of the fable itself is most obscure. The gods did not make the miracle, but found it there; Jupiter used it with infallible success:—this was all Apollo could tell Venus about it, when she asked him the reason of the immediate cessation of her love for Adonis, on leaping from this rock into her native element,—and we cannot be expected to know more. But the

* Formidatus nautis. Vir. Æn. iii. 272.

mystery is greatly increased when the experiment passes from divine to mortal adventurers; for that any one of merely human capabilities could jump from any part of this line of cliff, without being dashed to pieces against the rocks below by the fall itself and the raving surge seems quite impossible, even though the devotee were winged or feathered with all the skill of mechanical art. Sappho, the half-goddess, is the first mortal on record who made the trial, and her attempt is followed by that of many of less noble fame of both sexes with various success. In her legend, which is fresh among the people, Phaon is of course the King of the island, and the Poetess a foreign Queen. He slights her passion, and she wanders over the hills in agony of heart; heedless of her steps she falls over the precipice. Another version makes her a "duchessa," to account in a popular way for the Venetian name of the "Doge's Point" (Capo Ducato), which the promontory now bears. Perhaps the adjoining bay and village of "Basilike" may have some connexion with the memory of Queen Artemisia, another heroine of "the leap;" and the ancient worship of the sun-god have something to do with the selection of "St. Elias," as the saint peculiarly reverenced in the island, in the same manner as Bellerophon speeding his northward flight in quest of the Chimæra has, in its heraldic distinction, assumed the form of "St. George" on horseback.

THE mariners were all asleep,
Save one half-dreaming at the stern,
Who gently bade me upward turn
My eyes, long gazing on the deep.
The wind had stol'n away,—our skiff
Rested, as if its sails were furled,
Upon the tide which softly curled
Around a triple-breasted cliff,

Whose steeps, in mistiest day-time bright,
Were almost above nature white,
Bare-fronted to the westering moon,
For the autumn night had past its noon.

I prayed that not a soul might wake,—
To be left utterly alone,—
That not the faintest human tone,
The silence of that time might break;
When,—as of old the alien maids,
Who sanctified Dodona's shades,
Drew out the tale of human fate,
From sounds of things inanimate,
Wont with inclinèd ear to listen,
Where branches rock or fountains rise,
Till high intelligences glisten
In their intense Egyptian eyes,—
So I began, in that light breeze,
Glancing along those noted seas,
To trace a harmony distinct,
A meaning in each change of tone,
And sound to sound more strangely linkt,
Than in my awe I dared to own:—
But when in clearer unison
That marvellous concord still went on,
And, gently as a blossom grows,
A frame of syllables uprose,

With a delight akin to fear
My heart beat fast and strong, to hear
Two murmurs beautifully blent,
As of a voice and instrument,—
A hand laid lightly on low chords,—
A voice that sobbed between its words.

"Stranger! the voice that trembles in your ear,
You would have placed, had you been fancy-free,
First in the chorus of the happiest sphere,
The home of deified mortality:

"Stranger, the voice that trembles here below,
While in your life, enjoyed a fame so loud,
That utmost nations listened to its flow,
And of its presence the old Earth was proud:

"Stranger, the voice is Sappho's,—weep, oh! weep,
That the soft tears of sympathy may fall
Into this prison of the sunless deep,
Where I am laid in miserable thrall.

"Not of my mortal pride, my mortal woe
Would I now speak;—there is no gentle maid,
Nor youth kind-hearted, but has sighed to know,
What was my love and how it was repaid!

" I had dear friends, who wept with bitter tears,
To watch my spirit's stream, which else had run,
In fulness and delight, its course of years,
Wasted and parched by that relentless sun.

" Of this far rock, and its miraculous power,
They heard, emmarvelled, and with sedulous prayer
Conjured me not to lose one precious hour,
But seek the cure of all my misery there.

" ' The Gods,' they argued in their fond esteem,
' Love their harmonious daughter far too well,
Not to pour forth on her diseased dream
The benediction of that soothing spell.

" ' When many a one, whose name will never shine
On after ages, there has found release,
How shall not *she*, already half divine,
Claim the same gift of spiritual peace ?'

" I told them, ' Thousands in that chilly deep
Might find relief from their weak hearts' annoy :—
Venus herself might try the counselled leap,
And rise oblivious of her hunter-boy ;

" ' The mystery of the place might moderate
The authentic passion of imperial Jove,
But did they hope for me that common fate,
They could know nothing of a Poet's love.'

" But vain my words ;—the tender-cruel hand
Of blinded friendship guided me away,—
I would have died in my own Lesbian land,
Not in these regions of the waning day !

" Thus here all bootless adorations paid,
I dared the height of this tremendous shore ;
What were your agonies, ye hope-betrayed !
When to your bosoms I came back no more ?

" Of the mysterious pass, that leads through death,
From life to life, I must not speak to thee ;
Enough that now I breathed another breath,
Beyond the portals of mortality.

" A stream received me, whose æthereal flow
Came to my senses like a perfumed sigh,
From the rich flowers that shed their light below,
And bowed their jewelled heads as I passed by.

" And opposite a tide of sound was driven,
That made the air all music, and from far
Glimmered bright faces through a dead-gold heaven,
As in an earthly night star follows star.

" At last I came to a gigantic gate,
That opened to a steep-ascending lawn,
Whence rose a Temple, whose white marble state
Was fused into that gold and purple dawn.

"Sisterly voices were around me chanting,
'Hail! Thou whom Song has numbered with the blest,
From fear, and hope, and passion's feverish panting,
Pass to thy crown, a Muse's glorious rest.'

"Entranced I entered,—but there stood between
Me and the fane, a queenly form and stern,
Upon whose brow, in letters all of sheen,
I saw the ancient name of Themis burn.

"She laid her hand on mine, it felt so cold,
She asked me, 'Whether I, whose soul had earned
This highest Heaven, now felt serene and bold;'
Then I into my conscious self returned.

"She asked me, 'Whether all that heart-distress,
In which my yielding womanhood had erred
From this my Goddess-state with bitterness
And shame was seen;' I answered not a word.

"Then, piercingly, she asked me 'Whether He,
Before whose charms I prostrated so low
My woman's worth, my Poet's dignity,
Was clear forgot;'—I answered slowly, 'No.'

"Strange strength was in me; with consummate scorn,
I spoke of 'That Apollo, who could deem,
That by his magic leap, the true love-lorn
Could wake to bliss, as from a troublous dream.'

" I said, ' The promised peace, the calm divine,
The cold self-power, and royalty of will,
Or there, or elsewhere, never could be mine,
For I was Sappho,—Phaon's Sappho still.'

" There was dead blackness on the golden sky,
There was dumb silence in the resonant air,
But still I cried aloud in agony,
' Heaven was not Heaven, if Phaon was not there.'

" With arms upraised, and towering looks averse,
That fearful Being uttered,—' Be it so,
Blessing thou wilt not, thou shalt have a curse ;
High bliss thou wilt not, thou shalt have deep woe.

" ' Thou hast defiled the Gods' most choicest dower,
Poesy, which in chaste repose abides,
As in its atmosphere ;—that placid flower
Thou hast exposed to passion's fiery tides ;

" ' Within the cold abyss, degraded, lone,
Beneath the rock whose power thou hast blasphemed,
From thy Parnassian, long-expectant, throne,
Lie banished, till by some new fate redeemed.'

" When will that new fate be ? I linger on,—
I know not what I wish ; Oh ! tell me, thou
That weep'st for one thou wouldst have smiled upon,
Dear Stranger, tell me where is Phaon now ?"

Here paused the Voice, and now, methought, I spoke,
But what I know not; for there passed a shock
Throughout my senses, like a lightning-stroke;
I started to my feet;—the tall white Rock
Walled the far waste of silent sea, the morn
Light-lined the East, on grey-white wings upborne.

THE RETURN OF ULYSSES.

THE identity of Ithaca and Thiáke is satisfactorily demonstrated by Sir W. Gell, and other writers. There still remains, too, in the minds of the islanders, the legendary remembrance of the wandering king and the faithful wife, who weaves and spoils her web for very sorrow and distraction. The localities are quite as recognisable as could be expected:—a Grotto was discovered a few years ago by the shepherds, just above the shore of the deep bay (λιμένος πολυβενθὲος), which bears a faithful likeness to the Homeric portrait of the cave of the nymphs. It is beautifully hung with stalactites, which are evidently the "distaffs" of its divine inhabitants, and its floor is strewn with fragments of votive amphoræ and other relics of ancient worship.

In another part of the island is a Fountain, still called "Melannéron." Now the cattle of Eumæus come to the fount of Arethusa to drink the "black water;" and as this is still the common drinking-place of all the neighbouring cattle, the name has probably come down from the Homeric times.

As to the house of Ulysses, two sites of ancient cities are clearly to be traced, the one on the Eagle-height (Αἰτω), near

the narrowest part, the other to the north of the western coast, still called the city (Στήνυκλι or Πόλις); but I should not hesitate to take the former for the more important, if not elder one, and, consequently, the most likely to have been the dwelling of the Chief of the Republic of the Islands. But any such detailed and special identification as that attempted by Gell is fantastical; and some correspondence between the description and the plan of the remains, proves nothing more than a generic similarity between the dwellings of nearly the same age in the same country.

THE Man of wisdom and endurance rare,
A sundry-coloured and strange-featured way,
Our hearts have followed; now the pleasant care
Is near its end,—the oars' sweet-echoed play,
Falls on the cliffs of Ithaca's deep bay;—
The enemy, on whose impetuous breast
The hero rode undaunted, night and day,
(Such was Minerva's power, and Jove's behest)
Scorns the inglorious strife and lays his wrath to rest.

And how returns the tempest-tossed? his prows
Gay-garlanded, with grand triumphal song?
Leaps he upon the strand, and proudly vows
Dire vengeance unto all who did him wrong?
Not so; for him, all force and passion strong,
And fretful tumult, for a while are o'er,—
He is borne gently, placidly, along,
And laid upon his own belovèd shore,
Even as a wearied child, in quiet sleep once more!

There is no part of that archaic Lay,
That strikes with such resistless power on me,
As this pure artist-touch, this tender ray,
A perfect-simple light of poesy;
Not the nice wiles of chaste Penelope,—
Not the poor pining dog that died of joy,—
Not the grey smoke the wanderer yearned to see,
Whose wavings he had traced, a careless boy,
Sweet as they are, for me this preference can destroy.

Where the "stone distaffs" of the nymphs of old,
Still make rich tracery in the sacred Cave,—
Where peasants the dark-shadowed Fountain cold,
Hail by the name the Poet found or gave,
Where on the Eagle-height the walls out-brave
All time, and only the full-fruited vine
Trails o'er the home,—it may be o'er the grave,
Of Him for whom these memories combine,—
Rest, care-worn mortal! rest, and let his sleep be thine.

GRECIAN SUNSET.

THE modern Greek phrase for the setting of the sun is "Βασιλεύει ὁ ἥλιος," "the sun reigns," or "the sun is a king." One interpretation of this expression was given me, viz., that in the vesper anthem beginning with the words, "Ὁ Κύριος Βασιλεύει," "the Lord reigns," the action was transferred to the sun itself, in the same feeling as the "Ave Maria" is the synonym of the close of an Italian day. Another explanation I have formed into the following lines.

IN perfect Kingliness now reigns the Sun ;
At morn, as one who girds himself for speed,
A Hero prompt to do a mighty deed,
And not to rest until the deed be done,
He rose :—at noon he wore the guise of one,
Who feels the purpose that his will decreed
Half-perfect, and goes onward to his meed,
Stronger than were his labour just begun ;
And now his aim attained, his triumph known,
In conscious dignity he mounts his throne
Of golden air, and ere the eve can spread
Her pale-rose veil above his royal head,
No courtier clouds around him, to the bed
Of a victorious rest, he passes all alone.

A GRECIAN THUNDER-STORM.

THE Thunder came not with one awful pulse,
When the wide Heaven seems quaking to its heart,
But in a current of tumultuous noise,
Crash upon crash,—a multitudinous clang
Of cymbals beating in the low-hung clouds,—
And every shortest interspace filled up
With echoes vivid as their parent sounds.
The lightning came not in one flash of light,
Soon yielding to the darkness, (which ere long
Is routed by another wingèd blaze,)
But with no pause, and swaying to and fro,
As if the common air was turned to flame.
So mused I, from this hot and furious scene
Drawing a timely lesson of calm Truth,
So,—when great nations are awake at heart,
And rise embattled, from an ancient sleep
Sudden aroused by some consummate deed
Of reckless tyranny, or glad to stand
For heir-loom rights, familiar liberties;
Through pain and loss and terror, unto death,—
Should be the expression of their energies,—
Earnest, intense, impassioned as you will,
But with no pause; the fruit is Victory.

THE SULIOT TO THE FRANK.

Of the famous cities of antiquity, comparatively few have saved from the "dark backward and abyss of Time" any testimonies to the splendour of their temples, political edifices, or private dwellings; the only marks, not only of their greatness, but of their very existence, are commonly walls and sepulchres. Similar has been the fate of many men and masses of men in the moral world, the general events of whose being have taken no hold on the remembrance of posterity, and who owe their historic life solely to their energies of resistance, and the peculiar circumstances of their destruction. Of this class is the story of the Republic of Suli, whose establishment is said to have originated with a few goatherds, about the middle of the seventeenth century *, but may, in all likelihood, be as ancient as the forced occupation of the most retired and most defensible positions, both of Roumelia and the Peninsula, by "Palikàri," genuine sons of old Greece, who, in the transference of their country from master to master, have remained, down to our time, individually free,

* The notion of its connexion with the "Selli" of Homer, (Il. xvi. 233,) has been disclaimed, and disproved by Peravos. (Hist. of Suli.) He supposes this people to have transmitted their name to the village of "Sello," at the foot of Olympus, between "Helasson" and "Vlakolivathos." The root of the word is probably in the language or tradition of the mountain Greeks; there is both a Suli and a Kako-Suli in the north of Attica.

and have won at this eleventh hour the reward of the strife of ages.

That this clan of mountain-marauders should, with so few peculiarities of manners and conduct, and a sphere of action so limited, have gained for themselves, in the common course of things, an especial and enduring fame, and have become an integral part of the history of later Europe, is highly improbable, and I think the whole cause of the distinction will be found in the aggressive measures of Alì Pasha, and the consequent intensity of passion with which they were encountered on the part of the Suliots. The determined will to destroy on the one side, aroused a will as determined to defend on the other; and as long as we confine our admiration to this exertion and the deeds it produced, nothing can be more just; but when we apply to the series of events which led to the annihilation of the whole tribe the feelings with which we in general regard the relations of oppressor and victim, of unauthorised violence and resisting innocence, we misapprehend the plain facts of the case. The Suliot character and method of life seem to have differed from that of the other robber inhabitants of the Grecian mountains, in nothing but the excess of their predatory activity, the rash impartiality with which they conducted their Klephtic enterprises, and, something more of social organisation and sympathies, the necessary consequence of their firm occupation of so large a district. At the time of the appointment of Alì to the office of Dervenji Pasha of Northern Greece, whose first duty was to establish free and safe passage on all the roads, they are said to have been possessed of sixty-six villages. Supposing the greater number were merely conquered by their arms, and added little to their actual force, yet the population was always sufficient to number 1000 or 1500 muskets. M. Pouqueville is, at least, an unobjectionable authority on this subject, when he is compelled to lay aside his most inveterate prejudices, and own the legitimacy of the

Pasha's attempts to repress their outrages. "Pillaging alike friends and foes, they carried their imprudence so far as to embroil themselves with the chiefs of the armatolis, and even with the Turks of Thesprotia. *All commercial intercourse* was interrupted in Lower Albania. The defiles were no longer passable without numerous escorts, which were often defeated by these audacious mountaineers." This statement explains the active assistance afforded by the Greek armatolis (or self-constituted militia), in the expedition against these Greek outlaws, and makes it clear that the identification of the cause of Suli with that of Greek liberty is abundantly fanciful, at the same time that it shows the necessity for compulsory measures. Treachery, the diplomacy of such men as Alì, was first tried to effect the submission of the republic, and when this was met by equal cunning and inflexible courage and utter scorn, we cannot be surprised at the determination of the tyrant to avenge his insulted pride at any cost of life, treasure, or crime. "In this contest," says Lord Byron, "there were several acts performed not unworthy of the better days of Greece." The first attack was repelled with an enthusiasm, against which superiority of physical force was nothing-worth, which unsexed the weakness of womanhood, and, aided by rare advantages of position, gave the child who could roll down a stone upon the climbing or flying foe the power of a warrior. The nine years' peace, the fruit of this marvellous victory, was followed by a three years' war, conducted on the one side with all the exertion of the most vigorous mind in the history of the modern Mahommedan world, supported by a wide and absolute authority, and on the other by an unflinching struggle almost against hope in the mass of the people, which would possibly have vanquished, in the end, a force whose very excess of numbers was a confusion and embarrassment, had not individual perfidy opened the otherwise impenetrable passes.

YOUR phrases are good and your promises fair,
Your heart may respond to the meaning they bear,
Such things may seem just to your nature and name,
To *us* they are baseness, and folly, and shame.

I ask you would Nature have planted us there,
Where Earth's farthest region is bounded by air,
Where the great Eagle pauses in wonder to see
That the race he contemns as exalted as He,—

Where corn never waves, and the diligent flock
Tracks out the scant grass that is sprent on the rock,
Where the clouds fold about us in darkness and dew,
Had she meant us to live and have feelings, like you?

She gave you your cities, your pleasures, and arts,
Your fairly-built homes, and your populous marts,
Your paths o'er the ocean, your science, and lore,—
She gave us our Freedom and gave us no more!

But not the half-freedom, that makes the half-slave,
The guard of the timid, the curb of the brave,
A freedom of charter, and rights, and decree,—
But the Freedom with which our fathers were free.

To be free to exist,—for evil or good,—
Like the wolf in the brake, or the hawk in the wood,
To follow our instincts, and bend not in awe
To a chance-begot king, or the phantom of law;

To be free to fall down on the wealthier land,
With musket at back and dagger in hand,
And use the sole right that we own or we know,
The right of the strongest, wherever we go;

Here take our creed, we are Klephts if you will,
There are worse names than that in the chapter of ill,
For we give what we take,—let the resolute man
Resist us, and kill us, and well,—if he can.

Behold our Women! their forms are as fair,
As love ever guarded with delicate care,
They have all woman's beauty, but yet Nature wills,
No weak woman-hearts should be born on our hills.

They know not the distaff, they know not the loom,
Such tasks, to their hands, would be dull as the tomb;
And why should they toil without pleasure or gain?
They are clothed with the spoils that we bring from the plain.

They clean our muskets, they sharpen our swords,
They speed us to battle with kisses and words,
And when to our homes the hot enemy 's nigh,
They show us our children, and bid us go die.—

This Will to resist, whoever the foe,
Is part of our being,—the thing must be so,—
As the Faith we adore, as the Hills where we range,
As the blood of our Fathers, *that* never can change.

Ali Pasha knows that the hate we have vowed
Can never be broken, can never be bowed,
We hate him as Turk, as tyrant, as man,—
We hate as he hates, that is all that we can.

Ali Pasha knows with what mercy he'd meet
Were he laid by the chances of war at our feet;
He has smiled at each pang of a Suliot's frame,
How loud would we laugh, when he suffered the same.

Neither dazzled with hope nor blinded with pride,
Do we look on the tempest our hearts have defied,
Let them conquer at last,—we are ready for all,
What on earth has not fallen, and shall not we fall?

Yet still we have faith, that their number and nerve
Will not force the strong spirit within us to swerve,—
When the breath of a traitor shall poison our air,
It is then, only then, we shall dare to despair.

But then, even then, though the blood-sated foe
Shall ravage our homes till each stone be laid low,
Though the manifold voice of our nation be still
In the winding defile, on the fort-headed hill,

Though the stranger shall pause in the desolate scene,
To ask some lone herdsman of things that have been,

And the water undrawn in the weed-clotted wells*
Be a visible sign of the tale that he tells;

One memory brightly shall start from the shade,
Where we, and our passions, and errors are laid,
One thought, that there only through all this wide land,
The Cross was upright in the Christian hand.†

In the valleys beneath us, degraded, forlorn,
It's being the boon of the Infidel's scorn,
In shame and in darkness it lingers, but *there*
It is waving as free as the ambient air.

The time may be near when the Mussulman sword
Shall rend in its fury the sign of the Lord,
Shall defile it with dust and pollute it with gore,
But the last of *our* race will have fallen before.

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* At the site of the hamlet of "Samoriva" two lean asses, at "Kako (κάτω?) Suli" the capital village, a scanty herd of goats and their solitary keeper, were the only living things I saw among the scorched and broken frame-works of houses: the number of wells or rather cisterns at the latter place, nearly close together, is extraordinary; our guide, himself a Suliot, said that there was a separate one for each house; this, however, may be well discredited.

† There is no doubt that religious passion strongly assisted the Suliots in bearing up against their enemy; in their latter and most desperate struggles, they were generally led on by a priest, and the red cross was their banner.

TEMPE.

"Tempe's Thal,——das elysiche Thal,
Wo des Stromgotts Urne längs
Gruner Au'n Goldfluthen giesst."—PLATEN.

"Je crois que le nom de ce fleuve (Galesus) a fait sa fortune chez les poètes, qui ne se piquent pas d'exactitude, et pour un nom harmonieux donneraient bien d'autres souffiets à la vérité. Il est probable que Blanduse doit aux mêmes titres sa celébrité, et sans le témoignage de Tite Live, je serais tenté de croire que le grand mérite de Tempe fut d'enricher les vers de syllables sonores."—P. L. COURIER. LETTRES.

THE vale of Tempe is cleft in the range of consecrated hills which branches from the great Pindus-chain to the Saronic gulf, and divides Ossa from Olympus, a circumstance of no mean significance in the process of its poetical reputation. Its most striking, because, perhaps, most unexpected, character is its narrowness; it is, in fact, a glen of the most limited dimensions. The Peneus, never exceeding the common breadth of a mountain-river, and the horse-path, often worked out of the side and projections of the Ossa ridge, fill up the whole space, with the exception of a strip of some few feet between them, from which spring the glorious platains, whose boughs uniting with those on the other side of the stream lead it on under one continual bower; around their roots are pomegranate and mastic, and thick grass, with bubbling springs of a still deeper verdant tinge than the rest of the water. "*Intus suâ luce viridante adlabitur* Peneus, viridis calculo, amœnus circa ripas gramine," poetically writes the prosaic Pliny. The cliff, on the

Olympus side, is a majestic wall, jutting out at regular intervals, as if in folds, but almost evenly precipitous: the other side, on the contrary, is a line of rugged crags, peaked or table-topped, preserving occasional foundations and one or two turrets of the series of Roman fortresses, and well planted to their summits. I felt it rather a singular scene than any thing else, and much more singular must it have been in the old time, before the large secretion of alluvial soil, which places the mouth of the river many miles from the end of the ravine. "When Xerxes beheld," says Herodotus*, "the mouth of the Peneus, he was seized with great admiration;" so even now I admired, but it was not admiration alone one wanted here. The admission of this impression of disappointment naturally led to the consideration of the causes of the eminence of this place in poetical geography. On this point two circumstances must not be overlooked; first, that the use of it, as a proverb of surpassing beauty, is exclusively Roman; and, secondly, that the mention of, and allusions to it, in Roman writers, are still more vague and indefinite than proverbial expressions are wont to be; with the exception of Horace, who may have passed through Tempe on his way to, or in return from, the disaster of Philippi, few of them could have had any personal knowledge of the scene which they were undeservedly exalting above all the familiar charms of their own glorious Italy, and adorning with the wilfulness of fancy. The description of Livy† may seem more close; but its whole tenor has little in common, not only with the enchanted imagination of the poets, but with the simplest features of the reality. Secondly, that the traveller, who had toiled for three or four days over the sullen monotony of the plain of Thessaly, was likely to be exaggerat-

* vii. 128.

† Rupes utrimque ita abscissæ sunt, ut despici vix sine vertigine quadam simul oculorum animique possit,—terret et sonitus et altitudo per mediam vallem fluentis Penei amnis.—xliv.

edly sensible of the beauty and interest into which his path suddenly transported him, and to bear away a remembrance commensurate with the pleasure he had received; but what must have been his state of feeling, his heart how highly toned, his spirit how eager a recipient of sweet and lovely impressions, and not only his, but that of those who heard him tell of what he had seen, and of those who transmitted the report to other lands and other generations, when he knew that this was "the Elysian valley," that the gods were on one side, and the god-like giants on the other, that the legend of the Titanic war, the battle of the powers of the Universe, took its date perhaps from that very convulsion of nature which caused this remarkable disruption of the mountains; that here those blessed beings, forms of Love and Truth, gentle and sublime, ("not yet dead, but in old marbles ever beautiful,") who were dear to him as his own thoughts, held their divine diversions; poised in air, or laughingly descending, walking proudly within this gallery of proud trees, or sheltered within this jewelled tide from the mid-day passion of the Sun their brother, while from that throne of rock looked down the Father and the King, an immense shadow in the midst of his own light, with a thoughtful delight and solemn smiles!

We are in Tempe, Peneus glides below,—
That is Olympus,—we are wondering
Where, in old history, Xerxes the great King,
Wondered. How strangely pleasant this to know!
We may have gazed on scenes of grander flow,
And on rocks cast in shapes more marvellous,
Now this delicious calm entices us,
These platain shades, to let the dull world go.
A poet's Mistress is a hallowed thing,

And all the beauties of his verse become
Her own ;—so be it with the poet's Vale :
Listen those emerald waters murmuring,
Behold the cliffs, that wall the gods' old home,
And float into the Past with softly swelling sail.

OLYMPUS.

With no sharp-sided peak or sudden cone,
Thou risest o'er the blank Thessalian plain,
But in the semblance of a rounded throne,
Meet for a monarch and his noble train
To hold high synod ;—but I feel it vain,
With my heart full and passionate as now,
To frame my humble verse, as I would fain,
To calm description,—I can only bow
My head and soul, and ask again, "if that be Thou ?"

I feel before thee, as of old I felt,
(With sense, as just, more vivid in degree)
When first I entered, and unconscious knelt
Within the Roman Martyr's sanctuary :
I feel that ages laid their faith on Thee,

And if to me thou art a holy hill,
Let not the pious scorn,—*that* Piety
Though veiled, *that* Truth, though shadowy, were still
All the world had to raise its heart and fallen will.

Thou Shrine which man, of his own natural thought,
Gave to the God of Nature, and girt round
With elemental mightiness, and brought
Splendour of form and depth of thunderous sound,
To wall about with awe the chosen ground,—
All without toil of slaves or lavished gold,
Thou wert upbuilt of memories profound,
Imaginations wonderful and old,
And the pure gems that lie in Poets' hearts untold.

God was upon Thee in a thousand forms
Of Terror and of Beauty, stern and fair,
Upgathered in the majesty of storms,
Or floating in the film of summer air;
Thus wert Thou made ideal everywhere;
From Thee the odorous plumes of Love were spread,
Delight and plenty through all lands to bear,—
From Thee the never-erring bolt was sped
To curb the impious hand or blast the perjured head.

How many a Boy, in his full noon of faith,
Leaning against the Parthenon, half-blind

With inner light, and holding in his breath,
  Awed by the image of his own high mind,
  Has seen the Goddess there so proudly shrined,
Leave for awhile her loved especial home,
  And pass, though wingless, on the northward wind,
On to thy height, beneath the eternal dome,
Where Heaven's grand councils wait, 'till Wisdom's
    self shall come.

Ours is another world, and godless now
  Thy ample crown; 'tis well,—yes,—be it so,
But I can weep this moment, when thy brow
  Light-covered with fresh hoar of autumn snow,
  Shines in white light and chillness, which bestow
New grace of reverend loveliness, as seen
  With the long mass of gloomy hills below:
Blest be our open faith! too grand, I ween,
To grudge these votive tears to Beauty that has been.

A VISION OF THE ARGONAUTS.

The gulf of Volo (Pelasgicus Sinus) has received the merited homage of every tourist in northern Greece. As seen from some miles inland, and even from some parts of its own shore, it is so weather-fended and mountain-bound, that it becomes difficult to imagine it as a part of the open Ægean,—the many-islanded Ægean,—to believe that the waters at your feet are of the sea, over which Delos wandered, and which now contains it within "her glassy cestus." The form of Pelion is improved by a close approach, and the villages which climb above half-way up its sides would beautify the least attractive surface, each house rising with its own cypresses and platans about it, in an irregular succession. Here too, as elsewhere, the first and oldest association is the brightest,—that of the Argonauts; the light of the tradition is refracted in its different colours on almost all the many cities that have lived and perished on this hilly shore; it was doubtless an object of eager rivalry, from which of them went forth the parent ship,—the aboriginal sea-conqueror,—the ocean-opener! A peasant asked us whether it were not true that "hence set out the first Ship that ever sailed."

It is a privilege of great price to walk
With that old sorcerer Fable, hand in hand,
Adown the shadowy vale of History:
There is no other wand potent as his,

Out of that scene of gloomy pilgrimage,
Where prostrate splendors and unsated graves
Are ever rained upon by human tears,
To make a Paradise of noblest art,
A gallery of bright thoughts, serene ideas,
Pictorial graces, everlasting tints,
To the heart's eye delicious,—pure delight
Of Beauty and calm Joy alternating
With exercise of those high attributes,
Which make the will of man indomitable,—
Justice, and enterprise, and patriot-love.

That Peasant's simple question to my thoughts
Became a mystic thread,—a golden clue;
For when I drew it towards me, all the veil
Of the deep past shrunk up, and light profuse
Fell round me from time-clouded memories;
The full-noon-day, it seemed to me, went back,
And passed into the pearly grey of morn,
From which, in outline dim, slowly came forth
Pelion,—his lower steeps (now populous
With village voices) desolate and bare;
And the now naked range of loftier rock,
Thick-vested with a mantle of warm pine.
Along the shore, the turreted serail,
And bright-adorned kiosks, and low bazaar,
Into a city strange, of ancient form,

But to my spirit's sight faintly defined,
Was changed;—yet I could palpably discern
A crowd that stood before a portico,
And a thin smoke that from the midst arose,
As of a sacrifice; and close beside,
The waters rested in inviolate calm.

Upon their edge, yet clinging to the sand,
There was a shape, of other frame and kind
Than I had ever seen the wave embrace;
A burden of full-armèd men it bore,
And from its centre the aspiring stem
Of a straight oak, Dodona's holy growth,
Upsprung, with leafy coronal unshorn.
The joy of prosperous omens on the land
Awoke the silence of that solemn dawn;
And as it ceased, a clear and manly voice
Out of the shape responded musical,
And thus its meaning sunk into my soul.

"Not with the rapid foot and panting breast,
With which, be Pelion's dark-haired front
And mountain-thickets far away
Our witnesses, the eager heart was wont
To lead us to the boar's absconded rest
Unwearied, while before us lay
The hope of an illustrious prey,—

Nor, by the impulse of Pheræan* steeds,
Bearing the warrior and the car
Into the central depths of war,
While he, thus wingèd, hardly heeds
The presence of opposing spears,
More than the north wind fears
The grove whose mass he can crush down like reeds;
—Not thus the work is to be done,
Which this fleet-passing hour will see begun.

"For these are means, whose excellence can lead
To victory in the practised chase
Or common usage of heroic arms:—
Our thought is now to do a hardier deed;
Sublimer energy our spirit warms
Than bard has ever sung in Grecian halls;—
Where to succeed will place
Our name 'mid nations' festivals,
And where to fail itself will be
A glory for eternity.

"Over a wider and more dreary plain,
Than curious mortals know,

* Vide Iliad ii. 763, for the excellence of the horses of the hero, the eponymus of the house which gave its name to the place. Pheræ, now Velestino, is near the Bœbèan marsh (ii. 711), a few miles to the N.W. of Volo. Pagasæ was its port. There are walls and the site of a temple on the hill above it.

Trackless and markless as fresh-fallen snow,—
An awful space, on which the stain
Of human foot has never lain,—
Uncrossed by cheerful bird,—
Where never sound is heard,
But the unpausing din,
Half laughter and half groan,
Of the Divinity that stirs within,
And answers all the winds that blow
In thunder-tone ;—
Over this mystic plain,—
The earth-enclosing Ocean-plain,
We are about to go.

" And let no holy fear restrain
The hearts, that know no fear beside ;
For, not in impious disdain
Of the eternal rules, that bind
The destinies of human kind
Within sage limits, and wild pride,
But with the free obedience
Of a most perfect reverence,
Dare we the untamèd billow to bestride.

" For had it been in truth the imperial will
Of Mother Nature, when her plastic hand
Did the vast depths with buoyant liquid fill,

To plant a barrier betwixt land and land,
And keep each portion separate,
Encircled by a special fate;
How could the Gods, the everwise,
Have urged us to our enterprise
With favouring voices and protecting eyes?
How could our rude sea-chariot be
Made instinct with applauding Deity?

"A just and noble aim,
The Gods with love regard,—
But the self-glorious, the bold
Who honour not the laws of old,
A jealous justice will reward,
With woe and bitter shame;
We have not forgot
The miserable lot
Of Tantalus, ambrosia-fed,
Tantalus, whose kingly head
Deep in deepest Hades lies,
Eminent in agonies;
Even where our journey leads,
In that Eastern distance, bound
To an ice-peak, ever bleeds
He of the unclosed heart-wound,
The unsubdued and godlike one,
Who robbed the treasury of the sun;

But *he* such warnings little heeds,
Whose soul is fixed upon an honest end,—
Him *must* the Gods befriend.

"And is it not a virtuous aim,
Even to the earth's extremest shore,
By means no mortal force essayed before,
To bear the glory of the Grecian name?
To spoil the spoiler, wash away the stain
Of foully-slaughtered parentage, restore
To Greece the precious gift of yore,
Kind Gods to Helle and her brother gave,
Though Destiny restrained the power to save.

"Thus hasting to a sacred war,
With Pæan and delighted song,
We feel our feet upon the Car,
Which the broad-wingèd Winds shall bear along;
No strength of ours their turbulence restrains,
No will of ours their vagrant course commands,
But ye who love us, fear not, for the reins
Are in almighty and benignant hands.—
And if the blindly-falling brand
Of Fate, that neither spares the wise nor brave,
Far from his loved paternal land,
Should lay some Hero under the dark wave;
Yet let him not be deeply mourned,

As dead inglorious, or cast out unurned :
For the fond-pitying Nymphs below,
Will cover him with golden sand,
And sing above him songs of woe,
Sweeter than we can understand ;
The grace of song shall breathe upon his name,
And his Elysian bliss be endless as his fame."

There was a moment's pause, and then, methought,
The exuberant shout, that to the warriors' strain
Had made tumultuous prelude, came again,
But with still loftier passion ; to the cause
I gave a quick attention, and beheld
Above the low Magnesian promontory,
A small and solitary flaccid cloud
Lowly suspended, by the clear round sun*
(Which seemed to halt behind it as he rose)
Gorgeously glorified ; to this all eyes
Were turned, and every voice a homage paid :
" The Fleece, the Golden Fleece, *our* Golden Fleece,"
Rose in a storm of sound, and instantly,
Though with no visible wind or ruffled tide,
But as impregnate with propelling power,
The Shape, no more dependent on the sand,
Into the open waters past, serene.

* The sun itself was supposed to have its bed in Colchis. Mimnermus apud Athen.

Then as the Vision fainted, self-dispersed
In the full-flaring light, a melody,
Whose sense I could not justly apprehend,
But that it was of blessing and delight,
Emitted from the oracular central tree,
Caught up my heart, and bore it swift along
With that strange shape, into mysterious depths
Of placid darkness and undreaming sleep.

THE SPARTANS AT THERMOPYLÆ.

If the victory of Marathon was an Homeric rhapsody, the victory of Thermopylæ was an Æschylean tragedy, and my wish on the spot was, that here too, as well as at Salamis, the shame of the Persians had found such an artist to record it,—I regretted that there had been no Lacedemonian to frame in words the poetry his countrymen had acted. The scenes of the eventful drama unfolded themselves before me, one by one; on the wings of Fate and Duty it ever rested, and by their harmonious action moved onward to the end;—there was the utterance of the oracle, decreeing that Sparta or her king must fall, and the triumphant obedience of Leonidas; from that moment he was, to all base and earthly purposes, no living man; he bade his wife "marry some other virtuous man, and bring up children in honour;" and he and they who associated themselves eagerly in his sacrifice celebrated their own funeral games with sumptuous pride; there was the humiliation of number and force before moral greatness, in the wondering

terror of the herald who gazed on the handful of Spartans, calmly combing their long hair and engaged in sportful exercises, in the very face of the army of nations; there was the free dismissal, as it were, on the steps of the altar, of all who did not feel themselves bound by a law in their hearts, to remain and die; there was the last onset, the last leonine bound of those who might certainly have resisted longer and perhaps might have made more havoc among the enemy by remaining within the narrowest part of the pass, and fighting for every inch of ground, but this very act of waiting and resisting would have had something in it discordant with the perfect free-will of the whole action,—they went to *meet* fate to the very last; they went out, "as making a sortie for the purpose of death;" and, to consummate the immolation, when the few, who still struggled to preserve the venerated form of what was their King from the sacrilege of vile and hostile bands, were crushed back into the close strait of their own encampment, there was the solemn resting, the "sitting down" of this scanty band on the rising ground, waiting, in the strength of their weakness, till that tale of divine humanity should be altogether finished. And just as simply majestic were the monuments erected above them,—as pure and sacred the epitaphs;—they had done what they ought to do, they had obeyed,—that was all.

"Stranger! go tell the Spartans—we obeyed
All that they told us,*
and below are laid."
Their laws and customs. †

No parleying with themselves, no pausing thought
Of worse or better consequence, was there,
Their business was to do what Spartans ought,
Sparta's chaste honour was their only care.

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* According to Herodotus.

† According to Strabo.

First in the outlet of that narrowest pass,
Between the tall straight cliffs and sullen tide,
Before his Faithful, stood Leonidas,—
Before the Few who could not leave his side.

Never the hope of such a precious meed
Upon his most ambitious dreams had shone,
Through Him the Gods for Sparta had decreed
More fame than Athens earned at Marathon.

And more than this, he knew in that proud hour,
How high a price his single Life could claim,
Than in its sacrifice there lay the power,
Alone to save his father-land from shame,

Yet was he loth to meet that sacred fate,
As he there stood, cramped in by rocks and sea,
He would *confront* the Persian myriad's weight,
And die an unbound Victim, fighting free.

One more fair field,—one last unshackled blow
Strong with concentrate vengeance, this was all
That still remained to fill to overflow
The measure of the glory of his fall.

How He, and They who followed him in love,
Went forth and perished, is a tale to tell,
Such as old Bards to Epic music wove,
And so felt he who wrote their Chronicle.

* * * * *

* * * * *

The symbol Lion, that once stood in stone
Over the Lion-hearted, is no more;
Where sat the Last, on their sepulchral throne,
Is now a thing of antiquarian lore.

Nor mourn for this,—all other truth is vain,
But this, to know at heart, that They are there,
There in the giant cliffs, and perilous plain,
Paths, fountains, forest, ocean, every where.

Now let all Thought be Memory,—calmly wait,
Till clear defined, before thy Spirit's eyes,
Heroic Dignity, impersonate
In awful phantoms, silently arise.

Between the Men who noble deeds have done,
And every Poet to the end of time,
There is a brotherly communion,
One Father-God has made them both sublime:

And thus, to Thee, there can be nothing dead
Of great things past, they live in thine own will,
Thou givest them form,—they, on thy favoured head,
Virtues of earth and Heavenly Love distil.

THE MAID OF RHAMNUS.

THE aspect of the town and temples of Rhamnus must have been one of the most enchanting that Fancy can form out of Art and Nature. The buildings covered the sides and summit of an out-jutting rock, not much elevated above the sea; and we may infer from the huge gateway and walls, that the place was strong and noble. Above it rises with a steep acclivity the lofty line of coast, on whose highest ridge the temples were throned. All between the edifices is rich with Nature's profusion. On one side, down a steep and serpentine ravine, a full stream finds its way to the sea, flowing by the hill of the city. The temples, whose whiteness dazzles even in their decaying remnants, must have come out with a lustrous glory, from the thick green about them and the blue behind. They are two, within one large and solid peribolus; the earlier of Nemesis, built after the battle of Marathon, the other much later and of finer workmanship. In the former stood the statue of Phidias, the offering of the perfection of Athenian art to the Power who had avenged Athens so well. Pausanias, when on this subject, mentions casually, that no one thought of representing Nemesis as a winged Goddess, before the inhabitants of Smyrna, who gave as their reason for this impersonation, "the near connection of Vengeance and Love."

A MAID, whose beauty was laid desolate
By many tears, outbreathed her tale of woe,
In that dread fane, with words of such deep hate,
As they who deeply love alone can know.

"Shall Love be free to speed his impious way,
Withering young hearts, that cannot but be true,
Unveiling beauty only to betray,
And Vengeance *not* be winged to pursue?

"Seem not at once so stern and calmly still,
Up, great Protectress! seize him while he flies,
None, none but thou, can match his demon skill,
And every hour another victim dies."

A priest half-hid confessed the truth and power,
That lay within the maiden's casual prayer,
And the sage Goddess willed that, from that hour,
Her earthly shape those two wide vans should bear.

GREEK RELIGION.

COULD we, though but for an hour, burst through those gates adamantine,
Which, as the children of men pass onward in swift generation,
Time's dark cavern along, are heavily closing behind them!
Could we but breathe the delight of the time when, fresh in his boyhood,
Out of his own exuberant life, Man gave unto Nature,
And new senses awoke, through every nerve of creation!

Waves of the old Ægean !—I listen your musical ebbing;
Smile to my eye, as you will, with smiles clear-crystal as ever,
Bind, in your silvery net, fair capes and embowerèd islands,
But ye can bear no more on your breast that vision of glory,
When in the cool moon-dew went forth the imperial revel,
Dolphins and pearl-shell cars, of the Queen and the People of Ocean ;
Whose sweet-undulant murmur the homeless mariner hearkened,
Over the undulant sapphire, and trembled in glad adoration.

How were ye voiced, ye Stars !—how cheerily Castor and Pollux
Spoke to the quivering seaman, amid the outpouring of tempest !
With what a firm-set gaze on the belt triple-gemmed of Orion
Looked the serene Greek child, as he thought of the suffering giant,
Panting with sightless orbs for the dawn's miraculous healing !
With what a sigh did he pass from the six proud deified sisters,

On to the fate of the fallen, and mourned for the love that dethroned her!
Not by elaborate charts did he read that book of the Heavens,
But to his heart's fine ear it was taught by a heavenly master.

Now from her window perchance may the maiden of desolate Hellas,
When with the woes of her love and her land her spirit is heavy,
Yearn to the white-bright moon, which, over the curvèd horizon,
Climbing the air still flushed with the flames of the opposite sunset,*
Seems with affectionate eye to regard her, and weep to her weeping;
But it is now not as when, having pined for Endymion's kindness,
She with the mourners of love held personal sympathy ever,
When in the sky's void chasms a wanderer, she to the pilgrim,
Over the world's sick plain, was a dear companion in sorrow.

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* The contemporaneity of a transparent moonlight with the roseate æther and gold and orange tracts of sunset is one of the most impressive phenomena of these *regions*.

Down through the blue-grey thyme, which roofs their courses with odour,
Rivulets, gentle as words from the lips of Beauty, are flowing;
Still, in the dusky ravine, they deepen and freshen their waters,
Still, in the thick-arched coves, they slumber and dimple delighted,
Catching the full-swelled fig, and the deep-stained arbutus ruby,—
Still, to the sea's sand-brim, by royally gay oleanders,
And oriental array of reeds, they are ever attended;
But they are all dumb forms, unimpregnate with vital emotion,
Now from the pure fount-head, no Nymph, her bosom expanding,
Dazzles the way-worn wretch with the smile of her bland benediction,
Giving the welcomed draught mysterious virtue and savour;—
Now no curious hind in the noon-tide's magical ardour,*
Peeps through the blossomy trellice, that over the pool's dark crystal
Guards the immaculate forms of the awful Olympian bathers;

* On the mystical power of noon in the appearance of supernatural beings, vide Theocritus, i. 15; Lucan, iii. 422; Philostratus, Heroic. i. art 4; Porphyrius de Antro Nymph. c. xxvi. and xxvii.

Now at the wide stream-mouth never one, one amorous Triton
Breathes to the surge and the tall marsh-blooms euphonious passion.

These high Temples around, the religious shade of the olive
Falls on the grass close-wove;—in the redolent valley beneath us,
Stems of the loftiest platain their crowns large-leavèd are spreading,
While the most motley of herds is adorning the calm of their umbrage;—
Yet ye are gone, ye are vanished for ever, ye guardian Beings!
Who in the time-gnarled trunks, broad branches, and summer enchantment
Held an essentiäl life and a power, as over your members,—
Soothing the rage of the storm by your piteous moans of entreaty,
Staying the impious axe in the paralysed hand of the woodman.
Daphne, tremulous nymph, has fled the benignant asylum
Which, in the shape of the laurel, she found from the heat of Apollo;—
Wan Narcissus has languished away from the languishing flower;—

Hyacinth dwells no more in his brilliant abode, and the stranger
Reads the memorial signs he has left, with a curious pleasure.

Thou art become, oh Echo! a voice, an inanimate image;
Where is the palest of maids, dark-tressed, dark-wreathèd with ivy,
Who with her lips half-opened, and gazes of beautiful wonder,
Quickly repeated the words that burst on her lonely recesses,
Low in a love-lorn tone, too deep-distracted to answer?

What must have been thy Nature, oh Greece! when marvellous-lovely
As it is now, it is only the tomb of an ancient existence?

MARATHON.

Of the battle of Marathon we have not only the heroic narrative of Herodotus, but supplementary traditions, illustrations, as it were, of the grand picture. Herodotus only writes, that Epizelius fighting was blinded by a vision; but we have, in Pausanias, the pendant story, that a man appeared in the thick fray, of rustic form and dress, and hewed down many Persians with a plough-share, and then vanished, and whom an oracle commanded to be worshipped as the hero Echetlœus; this was evidently the vision that blinded the champion. Again, the old antiquarian tells, that around the tombs of the slain, still in his own late age, there was a tumult of horses prancing and men combating all night long, which to listen for with a wilful curiosity brought evil fate, but not so when perceived by a casual hearer. Thus was Marathon, for ages, a field of holy fable—thus the maturity of Athenian splendour was linked to its infant energies, and Aristophanes regards the Μαραθωνομάχοι, with the same feeling of pride and respect with which Nestor looks back on the friends of his youth, "who are far different from what men are now-a-days."

I COULD believe that under such a sky,
Thus grave, thus streaked with thunderlight, of yore,
The small Athenian troop rushed onward, more
As Bacchanals, than men about to die.

How weak that massive motley enemy
Seemed to those hearts, full-fed on that high lore,
Which, for their use, in his melodious store,
Old Homer had laid up immortally.
Thus Marathon was Troy,—thus here again,
They were at issue with the barbarous East,
And favouring Gods spoke out, and walked the plain;
And every man was an anointed priest
Of Nemesis, empowered to chastise
The rampant insolence that would not be made wise.

THE CONCENTRATION OF ATHENS.

The Poet Keats, to whom the old Greek mind seemed instinctively familiar, in an unpublished fragment, speaks of the Greek Poets as

"Bards who died content on pleasant sward,
Leaving great verse unto a little clan,"

and continues with a prayer that he too may attain their old vigour, and sing

"Unheard,
Save of the quiet primrose and the span
Of Heaven and few ears."

Why should we wonder that from such small space
Of Earth so much of human strength upgrew,
When thus were woven bonds that tighter drew
Round the Athenian heart than faith or race?

Thus patriotism could each soul imbue
With personal affections, face to face,
And home was felt in every public place,
And brotherhood was never rare or new.
Thus Wisdom, from the neighbouring Parthenon,
Down on the Areopagus could fix
A watchful gaze: thus from the rising Pnyx
The Orator's inspiring voice could reach
Half o'er the City, and his solemn speech
Was as a father's counsel to his son.

PELASGIAN AND CYCLOPEAN WALLS.

Ye cliffs of masonry, enormous piles,
Which no rude censure of familiar Time
Nor record of our puny race defiles,
In dateless mystery ye stand sublime,
Memorials of an age of which we see
Only the types in things that once were Ye.

Whether ye rest upon some bosky knoll,
Your feet by ancient myrtles beautified,
Or seem, like fabled dragons, to unroll
Your swarthy grandeurs down a bleak hill-side,

Still on your savage features is a spell
That makes ye half divine, ineffable.

With joy, upon your height I stand alone,
As on a precipice, or lie within
Your shadow wide, or leap from stone to stone,
Pointing my steps with careful discipline,
And think of those grand limbs whose nerve could bear
These masses to their places in mid-air;

Of Anakim, and Titans, and of days
Saturnian, when the spirit of man was knit
So close to Nature, that his best essays
At Art were but in all to follow it,
In *all*,—dimension, dignity, degree;
And thus these mighty things were made to be.

WRITTEN AT MYCENÆ.

I SAW a weird procession glide along
The vestibule * before the Lion's gate ; †
A Man of godlike limb and warrior state,
Who never looked behind him, led the throng ;
Next a pale Girl, singing sweet sorrow, met
My eyes, who ever pointed to a fleck
Of ingrained crimson on her marble neck ;
Her a fierce Woman, armed with knife and net,
Close followed, whom a Youth pursued with smile,
Once mild, now bitter-mad, himself the while
Pursued by three foul Shapes, gory and grey :
Dread Family ! . . . I saw another day
The phantom of that Youth, sitting alone,
Quiet, thought-bound, a stone upon a stone.

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* *πρόπυλα τάδε.* Elect. 1391.

† This piece of Archaic sculpture is very spirited ; I think the Lions could not have had their heads as Clarke describes ; they must have been thrown more back, like the Lions rampant in our heraldic bearings. How strange it is that the ruins of Mycenæ, extensive and certain as they are, should have been so late an object of interest, that Spon and Wheler should have never heard of them, and Chandler *forgot* to go and see them.

ON A GROTTO AND WARM SPRING

AT THE HEAD OF THE GULF OF LEPANTO.

WITHIN this grot some summer night,
Did Amphitrite loose her dress,
And show the full unshaded light
Of all her ocean-queenliness.

Into the rock the vital glow
Passed out from her translucid form,
And thus the springs, that hither flow,
Are made for ever summer-warm.

Alas! the name of Her who wrought
This work, and all her glorious train,
Have faded far from common thought
And never will be there again.

But Thou,—who in these tempered waves
Delightest thy dust-fevered brow,—
For Thee the past has no such graves,
Where Poets worshipped, worship Thou.

CORINTH,

ON LEAVING GREECE.

I STOOD upon that great Acropolis,
The turret-gate of Nature's citadel,
Where once again, from slavery's thick abyss
Strangely delivered, Grecian warriors dwell.
I watched the bosom of Parnassus swell,
I traced Eleusis, Athens, Salamis,
And that rude fane * below, which lives to tell
Where reigned the City of luxurious bliss.
Within the maze of great Antiquity
My spirit wandered tremblingly along;—
As one who with rapt ears to a wild song
Hearkens some while,—then knows not whether he
Has comprehended all its melody,
So in that parting hour was it with Greece and me.

* It is very curious that some awkward ill-proportioned ruins should be the only memorials of that Corinth, whose exquisite refinement in all that could charm and embellish life was a proverb with the world, and who extended her existence so far into the later domains of Roman time. It may be that there was some sanctity attached to this temple, from its very age and ungainliness, which preserved it amid the annihilation of other more sumptuous and polished edifices.

MODERN GREECE.

As, in the legend which our childhood loved,
The destined prince was guided to the bed,
Where, many a silent year, the charmèd Maid
Lay still, as though she were not; nor could wake,
Till the first touch of his appointed hand
With the deep fountains of her subtle being
Made sympathy, and in her virgin bosom
The pulse of breath, that so long had beat on
Its regular measure, trembled and grew fast,
And the long fringes parted on her eyes,—
And she to her old world of light and sense
Was born again; so the Invisible Power,
Whose awful presence is upon our earth
Above all dominations, came at last
To Greece, and laid the magic of his hand
Upon her sleep, and she obédient rose.

She rose, but not as that enchanted ladie,
To whose unsullied beauty sleep had been

But as a veil, to guard off impure Time
From breathing on it, and had left no trace
Of its existence, but the long gold hair,
That, like a vestment, folded round her form;
Nor, even as they, who on this vulgar orb
Rise from their night's brief slumbers, hale and fresh,
With all the toil of yesterday behind them;—
No, Nations sleep not thus,—their sleep and rest
Has more of death about it,—in its hours
Silent corruption works, and slow decay;
And when some special grace bids them awake,
Half-blinded, with worn hearts, and sense confused,
They rush in fury from their couch of shame,
Proclaim themselves new-born, and free, and young,
Nothing of youth about them, but its passions,
Its vigorous lusts, and recklessness of ends.—

Oh! wouldst Thou, from thy hot delirious dream,
Look out upon the calm of long-past time,
Thine own bright natural youth, willing to learn;
Would only Greece remember what she was,
And then what made her so;—would she remember
That distant History records a time,
Though in the splendour of the after-light
Nearly obliterate, when she was as bare
Of every element of social being,
Of every use of moral energies,

Of all that can transform humanity
From the wild warrior-savage, instinct-led,
Into the thinking, acting citizen,
As now, or more so; but her infant soul,
Soon from that rude and miserable state,
Into a youth of healthy-springing thoughts,
Gay simple fancies, aspirations high,
Expanded under tutelary care
Of two wise nurses, delegates of God,
The Love of Beauty and Self-sacrifice:
And when, in the full time, came slowly on
Life's manly mood, and consciousness mature,
She, the fair faith and natural impulses
That waited on her morning, taking up
Into the accomplished glory of her noon,
Never forgot, through all the growth of wealth,
And martial action, and scholastic pride,
Her first affections,—and possessed at once,
A Mind informed by sage experience,
And a Heart fresh as it had come from heaven.

What, though the curse of this unresting world,
The influence that will let no greatness be,
Merged in the blackness of barbaric night,
This model of the perfect equipoise,
And just appliance of all human powers;
Yet still for You, born of a second dawn,

The children of another germ of life,
It has a voice of loud authority;
By the same laws it bids you train your minds,
To the same tutelage submit your hearts,
And to the sum of wisdom there laid up,
Adding the priceless gems of Christian truth,
Be owners of a treasury of such wealth,
As all the spirit of nations has not known.

ITALY.

Sempre vivete, o cari arti divine,
Conforto a nostra sventurata gente,
Fra l' itale ruine
Gl' itali pregi a celebrare intente.

G. LEOPARDI.

AN ITALIAN TO ITALY.

ALONG the coast of those bright seas,
Where sternly fought of old
The Pisan and the Genoese,
Into the evening gold
A ship was sailing fast,
Beside whose swaying mast
There leant a youth;—his eye's extended scope
Took in the scene, ere all the twilight fell;
And, more in blessing than in hope,
He murmured,—"Fare-thee-well.

"Not that thou gav'st my fathers birth,
And not that thou hast been
The terror of the ancient earth
And Christendom's sole Queen;
But that thou wert and art
The beauty of my heart:—
Now with a lover's love I pray to thee,
As in my passionate youth-time erst I prayed;
Now, with a lover's agony,
I see thy features fade.

"They tell me thou art deeply low;
They brand thee weak and vile;
The cruel Northman tells me so,
And pities me the while:
What can *he* know of thee,
Glorified Italy?
Never has Nature to his infant mouth
Bared the full summer of her living breast;
Never the warm and mellow South
To his young lips was prest.

"I know,—and thought has often striven
The justice to approve,—
I know that all that God has given
Is given us to love;
But still I have a faith,
Which must endure till death,
That Beauty is the mother of all Love;
And Patriot Love can never purely glow
Where frowns the veilèd heaven above,
And the niggard earth below.

"The wealth of high ancestral name,
And silken household ties,
And battle-fields' memorial fame,
He earnestly may prize
Who loves and honours not
The country of his lot,

With undiscerning piety,—the same
Filial religion, be she great and brave,
Or sunk in sloth and red with shame,
A monarch or a slave.

"But He who calls *this* heaven his own,
The very lowliest one,
Is conscious of a holier zone,
And nearer to the sun:
Ever it bids him hail,
Cloud-feathered and clear pale,
Or one vast dome of deep immaculate blue,
Or, when the moon is on her mid-year throne,
With richer but less brilliant hue,
Built up of turkis stone.

"The springing corn that steeped in light
Looks emerald, between
The delicate olive-branches, dight
In reverend gray-green;
Each flower with open breast,
To the gale it loves the best;
The bland outbreathings of the midland sea,
The aloe-fringed and myrtle-shadowed shore,
Are precious things,—Oh, wo the be
Must they be mine no more?

"And shall the matin bell awake
My native village crowd,
To kneel at shrines, whose pomp would make
A Northern city proud?
And shall the festival
Of closing Carnival
Bid the gay laughers thro' those arches pour,
Whose marble mass confronts its parent hill,
—And *I* upon a far bleak shore!
My heart will see them still:

"Beautiful forms! and aye repent
The waywardness and pride,
That was not with their charms content,
And yearned for aught beside;
For some imagined bliss
I might have slain all this,—
I might have sprent thy gorgeous robe with blood,
And scarred the lucid clearness of thy brow,
Dear land! in sooth, I meant thee good,
But know the madness now.

"What though in poverty and fear,
Thou thinkst upon the morrow,
Dutiful Art is ever near,
To wile thee from all sorrow;

Thou hast a power of melody,
To lull all sense of slavery;
Thy floral crown is blowing still to blow,
Thy eye of glory ceases not to shine,
And so long as these things be so,
I feel thee, bless thee, mine!"

There can be no desire in these lines to depreciate the high merit of the Italian political exiles of this (1831) and former years. If the intensity of their patriotic feelings be here fairly painted, the mightier has been their energy of self-sacrifice, and the heartier should be our admiration. But though

"Deh! fossi tu men bella o almen piu forte,"

may be the stifled cry of many an Italian heart,—yet the mass, in weakness and in indolence, bear with their governors; and it is with regard to these, that we should weigh, in a just measure, the physical differences between countries, where Life is worth living for its own sake, and those where all the excitement of social and political feelings is necessary to give zest and enjoyment to existence.

WRITTEN IN PETRARCH'S HOUSE AT ARQUA,

AMONG THE EUGANEAN HILLS.

PETRARCH! I would that there might be
In this thy household sanctuary
No visible monument of thee:

The Fount that whilom played before thee,
The Roof that rose in shelter o'er thee,
The low fair Hills that still adore thee,—

I would no more; thy memory
Must loathe all cold reality,
Thought-worship only is for thee.

They say thy Tomb lies there below;
What want I with the marble show?
I am content,—I will not go:

For though by Poesy's high grace
Thou saw'st, in thy calm resting-place,
God, Love, and Nature face to face;

Yet now that thou art wholly free,
How can it give delight to see
That sign of thy captivity?

FEELINGS EXCITED BY SOME MILITARY MANŒUVRES AT VERONA.

WHAT is the lesson I have brought away,
After the moment's palpitating glee?
What has this pomp of men, this strong array
Of thousands and ten thousands been to me?
Did I find nothing but the vision gay,
The mere phenomenon that all could see?
Did I feel nothing but the brute display
Of Power,—the show of centred energy?
Trembling and humbled, I was taught how hard
It is for our strait minds at once to scan
The might of banded numbers, and regard
The individual soul, the living Man;
To use mechanic multitudes, and yet
Our common human feelings not forget!

MEDITATIVE FRAGMENTS, ON VENICE.

I.

"The ruler of the Adriatic, who never was infant nor stripling, whom God took by the right hand and taught to walk by himself the first hour."—LANDOR.

WALK in St. Mark's, the time the ample space
Lies in the freshness of the evening shade,
When, on each side, with gravely darkened face,
The masses rise above the light arcade ;
Walk down the midst with slowly-tunèd pace,
But gay withal,—for there is high parade
Of fair attire and fairer forms, which pass
Like varying groups on a magician's glass.

From broad-illumined chambers far within,
Or under curtains daintily outspread,
Music, and laugh, and talk, the motley din
Of all who from sad thought or toil are sped,
Here a chance hour of social joy to win,
Gush forth,—but *I* love best, above my head
To feel nor arch nor tent, nor anything
But that pure Heaven's eternal covering.

It is one broad Saloon, one gorgeous Hall ;
A chamber, where a multitude, all Kings,
May hold full audience, splendid festival,
Or Piety's most pompous ministerings ;
Thus be its height unmarred,—thus be it all
One mighty room, whose form direct upsprings
To the o'er-arching sky ;—it is right good,
When Art and Nature keep such brotherhood.

For where, upon the firmest sodden land,
Has ever Monarch's power and toil of slaves
Equalled the works of that self-governed band,
Who fixed the Delos of the Adrian waves ;
Planting upon these strips of yielding sand
A Temple of the Beautiful, which braves
The jealous strokes of ocean, nor yet fears
The far more perilous sea, " whose waves are years ?"

Walk in St. Mark's again, some few hours after,
When a bright sleep is on each storied pile,—
When fitful music, and inconstant laughter,
Give place to Nature's silent moonlight smile :
Now Fancy wants no faery gale to waft her
To Magian haunt, or charm-engirded isle,
All too content, in passive bliss, to see
This show divine of visible Poetry :—

On such a night as this impassionedly
The old Venetian sung those verses rare,
" That Venice must of needs eternal be,
For Heaven had looked through the pellucid air,
And cast its reflex in the crystal sea,
And Venice was the image pictured there*;"
I hear them now, and tremble, for I seem
As treading on an unsubstantial dream.

Who talks of vanished glory, of dead power,
Of things that were, and are not? Is he here?
Can he take in the glory of this hour,
And call it all the decking of a bier?
No, surely as on that Titanic tower †
The Guardian Angel stands in æther clear,
With the moon's silver tempering his gold wing,
So Venice lives, as lives no other thing:—

That strange Cathedral! exquisitely strange,—
That front, on whose bright varied tints the eye
Rests as of gems,—those arches, whose high range
Gives its rich-broidered border to the sky,—

---

* "Ich hörte einen blinden Sänger in Chioggia, der sang, Venedig sey eine ewige Stadt; der Himmel hätte sich im Meer gespiegelt und sein Widerschein wäre Venedig."—PLATEN.

† The Campanile.

Those ever-prancing steeds!—My friend, whom change
Of restless will has led to lands that lie
Deep in the East, does not thy fancy set
Above those domes an airy minaret?

Dost thou not feel, that in this scene are blent
Wide distances of the estrangèd earth,
Far thoughts, far faiths, beseeming her who bent
The spacious Orient to her simple worth,
Who, in her own young freedom eminent,
Scorning the slaves that shamed their ancient birth,
And feeling what the West could be, had been,
Went out a Traveller, and returned a Queen?

II.

The Golden Book*
Is now unwritten in, and stands unmoved,
Save when the curious traveller takes down
A random volume, from the dusty shelf,
To trace the progress of a bruited name;
The Bucentaur
Is shattered, and of its resplendent form
There is no remnant, but some splintered morsel,

---

* The Libro d'Oro, the Venetian "Peerage."

Which in his cabin, as a talisman,
Mournfully hangs the pious Gondolier;
The Adrian sea
Will never have a Doge to marry more,—
The meagre favours of a foreign lord
Can hardly lead some score of humble craft
With vilest merchandise into the port,
That whilom held the wealth of half a world.
Thy Palaces
Are bartered to the careful Israelite,—
Or left to perish, stone by stone, worn down
In desolation,—solemn skeletons,
Whose nakedness some tufts of pitying grass,
Or green boughs trembling o'er the trembling wall,
Adorn but hide not.
And are these things true,
Miraculous Venice? Is the charm then past
Away from thee? Is all thy work fulfilled
Of power and beauty? Art thou gatherèd
To the dead cities? Is thy ministry
Made up, and folded in the hand of Thought?
Ask him who knows the meaning and the truth
Of all existence;—ask the Poet's heart:
Thy Book has no dead tome for him,—for him
Within St. Mark's emblazoned porticoes,
Thy old Nobility are walking still;—
The lowliest Gondola upon thy waters

worth to him thy decorated Galley;
e never looks upon the Adrian sea
ıt as thy lawful tho' too faithless Spouse;
nd when, in the sad lustre of the moon,
ıy Palaces seem beautifully wan,
e blesses God that there is left on earth
marvellous, so full an antidote,
ır all the racks and toils of mortal life,
ı thy sweet countenance to gaze upon.

III.

LIDO.

I WENT to greet the full May-moon
On that long narrow shoal
Which lies between the still Lagoon
And the open Ocean's roll.

How pleasant was that grassy shore,
When one for months had been
Shut up in streets,—to feel once more
One's foot fall on the green!

There are thick trees too in that place;
But straight from sea to sea,
Over a rough uncultured space,
The path goes drearily.

I passed along, with many a bound,
To hail the fresh free wave;
But, pausing, wonderingly found
I was treading on a grave.

Then, at one careless look, I saw
That, for some distance round,
Tomb-stones, without design or law,
Were scattered on the ground:

Of pirates or of mariners
I deemed that these might be
The filly-chosen sepulchres,
Encircled by the sea.

But there were words inscribed on all,
In the tongue of a far land,
And marks of things symbolical,
I could not understand.

They are the graves of that sad race,
Who, from their Syrian home,
For ages, without resting-place,
Are doomed in woe to roam;

Who, in the days of sternest faith,
Glutted the sword and flame,
As if a taint of mortal death
Were in their very name:

And even under laws most mild,
All shame was deemed their due,
And the nurse told the Christian child
To shun the cursèd Jew.

Thus all their gold's insidious grace
Availed not here to gain
For their last sleep, a seemlier place
Than this bleak-featured plain.

Apart, severely separate,
On the verge of the outer sea,
Their home of Death is desolate
As their Life's home could be.

The common sand-path had defaced
And pressed down many a stone;
Others can be but faintly traced
I' the rank grass o'er them grown.

I thought of Shylock,—the fierce heart
Whose wrongs and injuries old
Temper, in Shakspeare's world of Art,
His lusts of blood and gold;

Perchance that form of broken pride
Here at my feet once lay,—
But lay alone,—for at his side
There was no Jessica!

Fondly I love each island-shore,
Embraced by Adrian waves;
But none has Memory cherished more
Than Lido and its graves.

IV.

Oh Poverty! thou bitter-hearted fiend!
How darest thou approach the Beautiful?
How darest thou give up these Palaces,
Where delicate Art in wood and marble wove
Its noblest fancies, with laborious skill,
To the base uses of the artizan?
How darest thou defile with coarsest stores,
And vermin's loathsome nests, the aged walls,
Whence Titian's women burningly looked down
On the rich-vested pomp that shone below?
Is nothing sacred for thy hand, no names,
No memories,—thou bold Iniquity!
Shall men, on whose fine brows we recognize
The lines of some great ducal effigies,
Which frown along St. John's cathedral aisles,*
With hearts as high as any of their fathers,
Sink silent under thy slow martyrdom,
Leaving their children, Liberty's just heirs,

---

* The Venetian Pantheon of S. Giovanni e Paolo.

Children like those that Gianbellini painted,*
To batten on the miserable alms,
The sordid fragments of their country's wealth,
Doled out by servants of a stranger king?
Is there no engine of compassionate Death,
Which with a rapid mercy will relieve
This ancient city of its shamèd being?
Is War so weary that he cannot strike
One iron blow, that she may fold her robe
About her head, and fall imperially?
Is there no eager earthquake far below,
To shiver her frail limbs, and hurl her down
Into the bosom of her mated sea?
Or must she, for a lapse of wretched years,
Armless and heartless, tremble on as now,
Like one who hears the tramp of murderous foes,
Unseen, and feels them nearer, nearer still;—
Till round her Famine's pestilential breath,
Fatally closing, to the gloom of Time,
She shall, in quivering agony, give up
The spirit of that light, which burnt so long,
A stedfast glory, an unfailing fire?
Thus ran the darkling current of my thoughts,
As one sad night, from the Rialto's edge,
I looked into the waters,—on whose face

* E. G. In the refectories of the Redentore and Frari.

Glimmered the reflex of some few faint stars,
And two far-flitting lamps of gondoliers,
That seemed on that black flat to move alone,
While, on each side, each well-known building lost
Its separate beauty in one dark long curve.

V.

City, whose name did once adorn the world,
Thou might'st have been all that thou ever wert,
In form and feature and material strength,
Up from the sea, which is thy pedestal,
Unto thy Campanile's golden top,
And yet have never won the precious crown,
To be the loved of human hearts, to be
The wise man's treasure now and evermore.—
The ingenious boldness, the creative will,
Which from some weak uncertain plots of sand,
Cast up among the waters, could erect
Foundations firm as on the central ground,—
The art which changed thy huts to palaces,
And bade the God of Ocean's temples rise
Conspicuous far above the crystal plain,—
The ever-active nerve of Industry,
That bound the Orient to the Occident
In fruitful commerce, till thy lap was filled

With wealth, the while thy head was girt with power;
Each have their separate palm from wondering men,
But the sage thinker's passion must have source
In sympathy entire with that rare spirit
Which did possess thee, as thy very life,—
That power of union and self-sacrifice,
Which from the proud republics of old time
Devolved upon thee, by a perfect faith
Strung to a tenfold deeper energy.
Within thy people's mind immutable
Two notions held associate monarchy,
Religion and the State,—to which alone,
In their full freedom, they declared themselves
Subject, and deemed this willing servitude
Their dearest privilege of liberty.
Thus at the call of either sacred cause,
All wealth, all feelings, all peculiar rights,
Were made one universal holocaust,
Without a thought of pain,—thus all thy sons
Bore thee a love, not vague and hard defined,
But close and personal, a love no force
Could take away, no coldness could assuage.
Thus when the noble body of Italy,
Which God has bound in one by Alps and sea,
Was struggling with torn heart and splintered limbs,
So that the very marrow of her strength
Mixed with the lavished gore and oozed away,—

Town banded against town, street against street,
House against house, and father against son,
The servile victims of unmeaning feuds,—
Thou didst sustain the wholeness of thy power,—
Thy altar was as a domestic hearth,
Round which thy children sat in brotherhood;—
Never was name of Guelf or Ghibelline
Writ on thy front in letters of bright blood;
Never the stranger, for his own base ends,
Flattered thy passions, or by proffered gold
Seduced the meanest of thy citizens.—
Thus too the very sufferers of thy wrath,
Whom the unsparing prudence of the state,
For erring judgment, insufficient zeal,
Or heavier fault, had banished from its breast,
Even they, when came on thee thy hour of need,
Fell at thy feet and prayed, with humble tears,
That thou wouldst deign at least to use their wealth,
Though thou didst scorn the gift of their poor lives.*
* * * * * *
Prime model of a Christian commonwealth!
Thou wise simplicity, which present men
Calumniate, not conceiving,—joy is mine,

* As in the instance of Antonio Grimani, who was living in exile at Rome at the time of the league of Cambray. He had been condemned for some error in fighting against the Turks. When Venice was in distress, he offered all his private fortune to the state. After her victory he was not only recalled, but elected Doge some years later.

That I have read and learnt thee as I ought,
Not in the crude compiler's painted shell,
But in thine own memorials of live stone,
And in the pictures of thy kneeling princes,
And in the lofty words on lofty tombs,
And in the breath of ancient chroniclers,
And in the music of the outer sea.

THE VENETIAN SERENADE.

When along the light ripple the far serenade
Has accosted the ear of each passionate maid,
She may open the window that looks on the stream,—
She may smile on her pillow and blend it in dream;
Half in words, half in music, it pierces the gloom,
"I am coming—Stalì—but you know not for whom!"
Stalì—not for whom!"

Now the tones become clearer,—you hear more and more
How the water divided returns on the oar,—
Does the prow of the gondola strike on the stair?
Do the voices and instruments pause and prepare?
Oh! they faint on the ear as the lamp on the view,
"I am passing—Premì—but I stay not for you!
Premì—not for you!"

Then return to your couch, you who stifle a tear,
Then awake not, fair sleeper—believe he is here;
For the young and the loving no sorrow endures,
If to-day be another's, to-morrow is yours;—
May, the next time you listen, your fancy be true,
"I am coming—Sciàr—and for you and to you!
Sciàr—and to you!"

The Venetian words here used are the calls of the gondoliers, indicating the direction in which they are rowing. *Sciare* is to stop the boat.

FROM GÖTHE.

Let me this gondola boat compare to the slumberous cradle,
And to a spacious bier liken the cover demure;
Thus on the Great Canal through life we are swaying and swimming
Onward with never a care, coffin and cradle between.

A DREAM IN A GONDOLA.

I HAD a dream of waters: I was borne
Fast down the slimy tide
Of eldest Nile, and endless flats forlorn
Stretched out on either side,—
Save where from time to time arose
Red Pyramids, like flames in forced repose,
And Sphynxes gazed, vast countenances bland,
Athwart that river-sea and sea of sand.

It is the nature of the Life of Dream,
To make all action of our mental springs,
Howe'er unnatural, discrepant, and strange,
Be as the unfolding of most usual things;
And thus to me no wonder did there seem,
When, by a subtle change,
The heavy ample byblus-wingèd boat,
In which I lay afloat,
Became a deft canoe, light-wove
Of painted bark, gay-set with lustrous shells,

Faintingly rocked within a lonesome cove,
Of some rich island where the Indian dwells;
Below, the water's pure white light
Took colour from reflected blooms,
And, through the forest's deepening glooms,
Birds of illuminated plumes
Came out like stars in summer-night:
And close beside, all fearless and serene,
Within a niche of drooping green,
A girl, with limbs fine-rounded and clear-brown,
And hair thick-waving down,
Advancing one small foot, in beauty stood,
Trying the temper of the lambent flood.

But on my spirit in that spicèd air
Embalmed, and in luxurious senses drowned,
Another change of sweet and fair
There passed, and of the scene around
Nothing remained the same in sight or sound:
For now the Wanderer of my dream
Was gliding down a fable-stream
Of long-dead Hellas, with much treasure
Of inworking thoughtful pleasure;
While the silver line meanders
Through the tall pink oleanders,
Through the wood of tufted rushes,
Through the arbute's ruby-bushes,

Voices of a happy hymn
Every moment grow less dim,
Till at last the slim caïque
(Hollowed from a single stem
Of a hill-brow's diadem)
Rests in a deep-dented creek
Myrtle-ambushed,—and above
Songs, the very breath of Love,
Stream from Temples reverend-old,
Porticoes of Doric mould,
Snow-white islands of devotion,
Planted in the rose and gold
Of the evening's æther-ocean ;—
O joyant Earth! belovèd Grecian sky!
O favoured Wanderer—honoured dreamer I!

Yet not less favoured when awake,—for now,
Across my torpid brow
Swept a cool current of the young night's air,
With a sharp kiss, and there
Was I all clear awake,—drawn soft along
There in my own dear Gondola, among
The bright-eyed Venice isles,
Lit up in constant smiles.—
What had my thoughts and heart to do
With wild Egyptian bark, or frail canoe,

Or mythic skiff out of Saturnian days,
When I was there, with that rare scene to praise,
That Gondola to rest in and enjoy,
That actual bliss to taste without alloy?

Cradler of placid pleasures, deep delights,
Bosomer of the Poet's wearied mind,
Tempter from vulgar passions, scorns and spites,
Enfolder of all feelings that be kind!
Before our souls thy quiet motions spread,
In one great calm, one undivided plain,
Immediate joy, blest memories of the dead,
And iris-tinted forms of hope's domain,
Child of the still Lagoons!
Open to every show
Of summer sunsets and autumnal moons,
Such as no other space of world can know,—
Dear Boat, that makest dear
Whatever thou com'st near,—
In thy repose still let me gently roam,
Still on thy couch of beauty find a home;
Still let me share thy comfortable peace
With all I have of dearest upon Earth,
Friend, mistress, sister; and when death's release
Shall call my spirit to another birth,
Would that I might thus lightly lapse away,
Alone,—by moonlight,—in a Gondola.

ON THE MAD-HOUSE AT VENICE.

"I looked and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island, such an one
As age to age might add, for uses vile,
A windowless, deformed, and dreary pile;
And on the top an open tower, where hung
A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung,—
We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue;
The broad sun sank behind it, and it tolled
In strong and black relief. 'What we behold
Shall be the Madhouse and its belfry tower,'
Said Maddalo." SHELLEY.

HONOUR aright the philosophic thought,
That they who, by the trouble of the brain
Or heart, for usual life are overwrought,
Hither should come to discipline their pain.
A single convent on a shoaly plain
Of waters never changing their dull face
But by the sparkles of thick-falling rain
Or lines of puny waves,—such is the place.
Strong medicine enters by the ear and eye;
That low unaltering dash against the wall
May lull the angriest dream to vacancy;
And Melancholy, finding nothing strange,
For her poor self to jar upon at all,
Frees her sad-centred thoughts, and gives them pleasant range.

23805

TO ———.

WRITTEN AT VENICE.

Not only through the golden haze
Of indistinct surprise,
With which the Ocean-bride displays
Her pomp to stranger eyes;—
Not with the fancy's flashing play,
The traveller's vulgar theme,
Where following objects chase away
The moment's dazzling dream;—

Not thus art thou content to see
The City of my love,—
Whose beauty is a thought to me
All mortal thoughts above;
And pass in dull unseemly haste,
Nor sight nor spirit clear,
As if the first bewildering taste
Were all the banquet here!

When the proud Sea, for Venice' sake,
Itself consents to wear
The semblance of a land-locked lake,
Inviolably fair;
And in the dalliance of her Isles,
Has levelled his strong waves,
Adoring her with tenderer wiles,
Than his own pearly caves,—

Surely may *we* to similar calm
Our noisy lives subdue,
And bare our bosoms to such balm
As God has given to few;
Surely may we delight to pause
On our care-goaded road,
Refuged from Time's most bitter laws
In this august abode.

Thou knowest this,—thou lingerest here,
Rejoicing to remain;
The plashing oars fall on thy ear
Like a familiar strain;
No wheel prolongs its weary roll,
The Earth itself goes round
Slower than elsewhere, and thy soul
Dreams in the void of sound.

Thy heart, by Nature's discipline,
From all disdain refined,
Kept open to be written in
By good of every kind,
Can harmonise its inmost sense
To every outward tone,
And bring to all experience
High reasoning of its own.

So, when these forms come freely out,
And wonder is gone by,
With patient skill it sets about
Its subtle work of joy;
Connecting all it comprehends
By lofty moods of love,—
The earthly Present's farthest ends,—
The Past's deep Heaven above.

O bliss! to watch, with half-shut lid,
By many a secret place,
Where darkling loveliness is hid,
And undistinguished grace,—
To mark the gloom, by slow degrees,
Exfoliate, till the whole
Shines forth before our sympathies,
A soul that meets a soul!

Come out upon the broad Lagoon,
Come for the hundredth time,—
Our thoughts shall make a pleasant tune,
Our words a worthy rhyme;
And thickly round us we will set
Such visions as were seen,
By Tizian and by Tintorett,
And dear old Giambellin,—

And all their peers in art, whose eyes,
Taught by this sun and sea,
Flashed on their works those burning dyes,
That fervent poetry;
And wove the shades so thinly-clear
They would be parts of light
In northern climes, where frowns severe
Mar half the charms of sight.—

Did ever shape that Paolo drew
Put on such brilliant tire,
As Nature, in this evening view,—
This world of tinted fire?
The glory into whose embrace,
The virgin pants to rise,
Is but reflected from the face
Of these Venetian skies.

The sun, beneath the horizon's brow
Has sunk, not passed away;
His presence is far lordlier now
Than on the throne of day;
His spirit of splendour has gone forth,
Sloping wide violet rays,
Possessing air and sea and earth
With his essential blaze.*

Transpierced, transfused, each densest mass
Melts to as pure a glow,
As images on painted glass
Or silken screens can show.
Gaze on the city,—contemplate
With that fine sense of thine
The Palace of the ancient state,—
That wildly-grand design!

How 'mid the universal sheen
Of marble amber-tinged,
Like some enormous baldaquin
Gay-chequered and deep-fringed,

* The perfect transparency and rich colour of all objects, and their reflections, in southern countries, for some short time after sunset, has an almost miraculous effect to a northern eye. Whenever it has been imitated in art, it has been generally pronounced unnatural or exaggerated. I do not remember to have ever seen the phenomenon so astonishingly beautiful as at Venice, at least in Italy.

It stands in air and will not move,
Upheld by magic power,—
The dun-lead Domes just caught above—
Beside,—the glooming Tower.

Now a more distant beauty fills
Thy scope of ear and eye,—
That graceful cluster of low hills,
Bounding the western sky,
Which the ripe evening flushes cover
With purplest fruitage-bloom,—
Methinks that gold-lipt cloud may hover
Just over Petrarch's tomb!

Petrarch! when we that name repeat,
Its music seems to fall
Like distant bells, soft-voiced and sweet,
But sorrowful withal;—
That broken heart of love!—that life
Of tenderness and tears!
So weak on earth,—in earthly strife,—
So strong in holier spheres!

How in his most of godlike pride,
While emulous nations ran
To kiss his feet, he stept aside
And wept the woes of man!

How in his genius-woven bower
Of passion ever green,
The world's black veil fell, hour by hour,
Him and his rest between.

Welcome such thoughts ;—they well atone
With this more serious mood
Of visible things that night brings on,
In her cool shade to brood ;
The moon is clear in heaven and sea,
Her silver has been long
Slow-changing to bright gold, but she
Deserves a separate song.

ODE

TO THE MOON OF THE SOUTH.

Let him go down,—the gallant Sun !
His work is nobly done ;
Well may He now absorb
Within his solid orb
The rays so beautiful and strong,
The rays that have been out so long
Embracing this delighted land as with a mystic song.

Let the brave Sun go down to his repose,
And though his heart be kind,
He need not mourn for those
He leaves behind;
He knows, that when his ardent throne
Is rolled beyond the vaulting sky,
The Earth shall not be left alone
In darkness and perplexity.

We shall not sit in sullen sorrow
Expectant of a tardy morrow,
But there where he himself arose,
Another power shall rise,
And gracious rivalry disclose
To our reverted eyes,
Between the passing splendour and the born,
Which can the most our happy world adorn.

The light of night shall rise,—
Not as in northern skies,
A memory of the day, a dream
Of sunshine, something that might seem
Between a shadow and a gleam,
A mystery, a maiden
Whose spirit worn and sorrow laden
Pleasant imaginations wile
Into a visionary smile,

A novice veiled in vapoury shrouds,
A timid huntress, whom the clouds
Rather pursue than shun,—
With far another mien,
Wilt Thou come forth serene,
Thou full and perfect Queen,
Moon of the South! twin-sister of the Sun!

Still harboured in his tent of cloth of gold
He seems thy ordered presence to await,
In his pure soul rejoicing to behold
The majesty of his successor's state,—
Saluting thy ascent
With many a tender and triumphant tone
Compassed in his celestial instrument,
And harmonies of hue to other climes unknown.

He too, who knows what melody of word
May with that visual music best accord,
Why does the Bard his homage now delay?
As in the ancient East,
The royal Minstrel-Priest
Sang to his harp that Hallelujah lay
Of the Sun-bridegroom ready for his way,
So, in the regions of the later West
This blessed even-tide,
Is there no Poet whose divine behest
Shall be to hail the bride?

A feeble voice may give an earnest sound,
And grateful hearts are measured not by power,
Therefore may I, tho' nameless and uncrowned,
Proffer a friendly tribute to thy dower.
For on the midland Sea I sailed of old,
Leading thy line of narrow rippled light,
And saw it grow a field of frosted gold,
With every boat a Shadow in the Bright;
And many a playful fancy has been mine,
As I have watched the shapes thy glory made,
Glimpsing like starlight through the massive pine,
Or finely-trellised by mimosa shade;
And now I trace each moment of thy spell,
That frees from mortal stain these Venice isles,
From eve's rich shield to morn's translucid shell,
From Love's young glow to Love's expiring smiles!

We gaze upon the faces we hold dear,
Each feature in thy rays as well defined,
As just a symbol of informing mind,
As when the noon is on them full and clear;
Yet all some wise attempered and subdued,
Not far from what to Faith's prospective eyes
Transfigured creatures of beatitude
From earthy graves arise.

Those evenings, oh! those evenings, when with one,
Then the world's loveliness, now wholly mine,

I stood beside the salient founts that shone
Fit frontispiece to Peter's Roman shrine;
I knew how fair were She and They
In every bright device of day,
All happy as a lark on wing,
A singing, glistening, dancing thing,
With joy and grace that seemed to be
Of Nature's pure necessity;
But when, O holy Moon! thy might
Turned all the water into light,
And each enchanted Fountain wore
Diviner beauty than before,
A pillar of aspiring beams,
An ever-falling veil of gleams,—
She who in day's most lively hour
Had something of composing power
About her mirthful lips and eyes,—
Sweet folly making others wise,—
Was vested with a sudden sense
Of great and grave intelligence,
As if in thy reflex she saw
The process of eternal law,
God's conscious pleasure working out
Through all the Passion, Pain, and Doubt;—
And thus did She and Thou impart
Such knowledge to my listening heart,
Such sympathies as word or pen
Can never tell again!

All spirits find themselves fulfilled in Thee,
The glad have triumph and the mourning balm :
Dear God ! how wondrous that a thing should be
So very glorious and so very calm !
The lover, standing on a lonely height,
Rests his sad gaze upon the scene below,
Lapt in the trance of thy pervading glow,
Till pleasant tears obscure his pensive sight ;
And in his bosom those long-smothered flames,
The scorching elements of vain desire,
Taking the nature of thy gentle fire,
Play round the heart in peace, while he exclaims,
" Surely my Love is out somewhere to-night ! "

Why art thou thus companionable ? Why
Do we not love thy light alone, but Thee ?
Is it that though thou art so pure and high,
Thou dost not shock our senses, as they be ?
That our poor eyes rest on thee, and descry
Islands of earth within thy golden sea ?
Or should the root be sought
In some unconscious thought,
That thy fine presence is not more thine own
Than are our soul's adorning splendours ours ?—
Than are the energies and powers,
With which reflected light alone
Illuminates the living hours,

From our own wells of being brought,
From virtue self-infused or seed of life self-sown?
Thus with ascent more ready may we pass
From this delightful sharing of thy gifts
Up to the common Giver, Source, and Will;
And if, alas!
His daily-affluent sun-light seldom lifts
To thankful ecstasy our hearts' dull mass,
It may be that our feeble sight
Will not confront the total light,
That we may love, in nature frail,
To blend the vivid with the pale,
The dazzling with the dim:
And lo! how God, all-gracious still
Our simplest fancies to fulfil,
Bids us, O Southern Moon, thy beauty hail,
In Thee rejoicing and adoring Him.

PICTURES IN VERSE.

I.

PICTURE BY GIOV. BELLINI, IN THE CHURCH OF THE REDENTORE AT VENICE.

THE VIRGIN.

Who am I, to be so far exalted
Over all the maidens of Judæa,
That here only in this lonely bosom
Is the wonder-work of God revealèd?
Oh! to think this little, little, infant,
Whose warm limbs upon my knees are resting,
Helpless, silent, with his tender eyelids,
Like two pearl-shells, delicately closèd,
Is informed with that eternal spirit,
Who, between the Cherubim enthronèd,
Dwells behind the Curtain of the Temple!
I can only gaze on him adoring,
Fearful lest the simple joy and passion
Which my mother-love awakes within me,
Be not something bold and too familiar
For this Child of Miracle and Glory.

TWO ANGELS.

(PLAYING ON INSTRUMENTS.)

We and the little cheerful goldfinch,
Perched above that blessèd seat,—
He above and we below,—
We with voices and sweet viols,
He with chirping voice alone,—
Glorify the happy Mother,
Glorify the holy Child.
Now that our great heavenly Master
Has put on this wondrous semblance
Of a humble mortal infant,
We, the Angels of his presence,
Are become as simple children,
And beside him watch, admiring
All his innocence and beauty,
Lulling him to downy slumbers
With remembrances of Heaven.

THE CHILD JESUS.

I seem to be asleep,—I seem to dream,—
But it is Ye, Children of fallen Man,
Who dream, not I. Though I am now come down,
Out of the Waking of Eternal Truth,

Here born into the miserable Dream
Of your poor Life, still I must ever wake,
For I am Love, and if ye follow me,
Ye too will wake ;—I come to lead the way.

II.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. CHRISTINA,

BY

VINCENZO CATENA, IN THE CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA MATER DOMINI, AT VENICE.

ST. CHRISTINA.

(KNEELING.)

I KNEW, I knew, it would be so,
That, in this long-expected hour,
Thou would'st not leave me, Christ, my Lord!
My poor blind-hearted enemies
Have brought me here to die,—even here,
In this my old delight, the Lake
Of dear Bolsena; they have tied
About my weak and slender neck
A ponderous millstone, that my frame
May be dragged down to surest death
Within that undulating tomb.

The stone is there,—the cord is there,
But the gross weight I cannot feel,
For round me, even while I pray,
Beautiful-wingèd childly shapes
Are gathering, smiling glorious smiles.
With what deep looks of sympathy
They dwell upon me! with what care
Some raise the cord, some raise the stone,
So that it cannot sway me down.
O my soul's lover! Saviour Christ!
I take this earnest of thy grace,
Assured that I shall lay aside
The coil of this tormented flesh,
Without a thought of fear or pain,—
That, when this mortal shell is cast
Into the stifling element,
That instrument of my distress
Will, at thy blessèd will, be changed
Into the very air of Heaven.

CHORUS OF ANGELS.

Sister Christine, sweetest Sister,
Know you not from whom we come?
See, we kneel around you kneeling,
Offering kind and loving duty,
All we can to soothe your suffering,

All we can to make you glad!
Ah! we see you look with wonder,
That our small and tender hands
Can raise up this heavy stone,
Without show of pain or labour:
Do you believe then,
That, because our long gold hair,
And our rosy-rounded faces,
And our laughing lips and eyes,
And our baby-moulded limbs
Are like those of earthly children,
We have not the strength, the glory, and the power,
Which our Father gives unto his dear ones,—
Which he will give to you, most happy Christine,
For you have loved him?

CHRIST.

(ABOVE, SPEAKING TO AN ANGEL.)

ANGEL! to thee is given the noble charge
To bear this martyr-mantle perfect-white
To my dear daughter Christine there below;
That she, when clothed thus worthily, may pass
From the hard triumph of her prison-life
To the embraces of essential Love.

ANGEL.

(KNEELING, AND HOLDING THE MANTLE.)

BURNING with delight, I haste
This high mission to perform,—
But it is an awful task,
Even for an Angel's hands,
Such a power of God to hold,
As the sign of Martyrdom.

III.

JESUS AND JOHN CONTENDING FOR THE CROSS.

BY

SIMEONE DA PESARO; IN THE COLLECTION OF THE SEMINARY AT VENICE.

THE CHILD JOHN.

(TRYING TO TAKE THE CROSS OUT OF THE HAND OF JESUS.)

GIVE me the Cross, I pray you, dearest Jesus!
Oh! if you knew how much I wish to have it,
You would not hold it in your hand so tightly:
Something has told me,—something in my heart here,
Which I am sure is true,—that if you keep it,—
If you will let no other take it from you,—

Terrible things, I cannot bear to think of,
Must fall upon you; show me that you love me:
Am I not here to be your little servant,
Follow your steps and wait upon your wishes?
Why may I not take up the heavy plaything,
And on my shoulder carry it behind you?
Then, I am older, stronger too, than you are;
I am a child o' the desert and the mountains;—
Deep i' the waste, I shouted at the wild bees,—
They flew away, and left me all the honey:
Look at the shaggy skin I 've tied about me;
Surely, if Pain or any other evil
Somewhere about this mystery be hidden,
I am the fittest of the two to suffer!

THE CHILD JESUS.

(HOLDING THE CROSS FIRMLY.)

Ask me not, my gentle brother,—ask no more, it must not be:
In the heart of this poor trifle lies the secret unrevealed
Which has brought me to this world, and sent you to prepare my way.
In the long and weary woodland, where your path of life will lead,

Thousand, myriad, other Crosses you will find on every side;
And the same eternal Law that bids me take this chiefest one,
Will be there to give you many, grievous as your strength can bear;
But in vain would you and others sink beneath the holy load,
Were I not with mine before you, Captain of the Crucified;
I must be your elder Brother in the heritage of Pain;
I must give you to our Father,—I must fall for you to rise.

THE VIRGIN.

(WITH HER HAND ON THE CROSS.)

My soul is weak with doubt,—
What can I think or do?
To which of these dear children shall I yield
The object of their earnest looks and words?

Ah me! I see within
That artless wooden form,
A meaning of exceeding misery,
A dark, dark, shadow of oncoming woe.

Oh! give it up, my child!
I see your bright eyes close,
Your soft fair fingers spattered all with blood,
Your cheeks dead pale;—throw down the horrid toy.

He grasps it firmer still!
I dare not thwart his hand;
For what he does, he does not of himself,
But in the Will of Him who sent him here.

And I, who labour blind
In this abysmal work,
Must bear the weight of dumb expectancy,
Of women first in honour and in woe!

IV.

CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO PURGATORY.

BY GIORGIONE, AT VENICE.

The saving work for man is finishèd,
The kingdoms of the Earth and Air o'erthrown;
So now hath Christ come down among the dead,
Spoiling the Spoiler, to redeem his own.
What blessèd glory plays about that head
For those who here in fiery bondage groan,

Conscious their suffering never could atone
For Sin, till He that once had sufferèd.
And, lo! in patient melancholy state
The synod of the Patriarchs rests apart
Condemned, tho' sons of God by faith, to wait
In this dark place and solitude of heart,
Joyless and tearless, till this Christ should come
To bear them to their Father and their Home.

TO GIOVANNI BELLINI.

SUGGESTED BY THE FACT OF THAT PAINTER'S HAVING HAD IN HIS ROOM A GRECIAN STATUE OF VENUS AS A STUDY.

Thou didst not slight with vain and partial scorn
The inspirations of our nature's youth,
Knowing that Beauty, wheresoe'er 'tis born,
Must ever be the foster-child of Truth.
Nor didst thou lower the Mother of the Lord
To the mere Goddess of a Pagan bower,
But with such grace as Christians have adored
Those sense-delighting charms thou didst empower;
And would that they who followed thee, and gave
To famous Venice yet another fame,

To be the Painter's home, had done the same,
Nor made their heart the imitative slave
Of those dead forms, as if the Christian span
Embraced no living Poetry for man.

The decline of pure religious feeling in Art in Venice may be, perhaps, most accurately dated from the influence of Aretino over Titian; up to that time he had hardly ever painted a profane subject, and no other artist ever seems to have thought of it. Afterwards such exceptions as Bonifacio and the piety of the people prevented so sudden a degradation as took place in the Roman school from Raffael to Giulio Romano, and in the Bolognese from Francia to Guido; but too soon came the younger Palma and his followers, the Caracci of the Venetians.

TO RAFFAEL.

"Raffael, alas! was the only person who conceived the project of recovering the remains of ancient Rome from its rubbish, by means of methodical excavations, and this led to no result whatever."—NIEBUHR.

THINE was the scheme, and worthy to be thine,
O Painter-Poet! with care and regular toil,
To raise those marvels from the entombing soil
With which Greek Art made Rome a place divine.
Though Gothic rage with Christian zeal combine,
Earthquake with flood,—the desolating coil
Of plague two centuries old with Guiscard's spoil,—

Brancaleone's fiercely-sage design
With other shocks,—of Pagan Rome to make
A mere blank memory,—thou hadst bade awake
Rare shapes from their deep beds, had Sympathy
Lent thee good aid . . . Still I could wish for thee
That thou hadst never yearned for them,—elate
To be in CHRISTIAN Art so great among the Great.

THE IMMORTALITY OF ROME.

"URBI et Orbi,*"—mystic euphony,
What depth of Christian meaning lies in Thee!
How, from this world apart, this world above,
Selected by a special will of Love,
In its own spiritual atmosphere sublime,
Rome lives, a thought, without the reign of Time.
Thus, at the gates of great Eternity,
Nature, the constant herald of God, I see,
And ever onward reads she this decree:—
"Let nations have their cycles,—let their course
Still run unchanged, whate'er their inner force;
Let each, whate'er its fabric, firm or frail,
Give its one chapter to the historic tale,
In silence and in shadow then to lie,
And, but in Memory's echo-life, to die;—

* The form of the Papal Benediction.

There is an end for all that is begun,
For the Sun's self, and all beneath the Sun."

Who dare deny this record?—Rome alone;
Rome has no history she can call her own;—
The history of the Western World is hers,
Writ out in all its mazy characters:
What know we of it, till that name began,
Whose light still hovers o'er the Vatican?
Where is the fount of all its myriad rills,
But springing 'mid the seven low Latian hills?
There, thoughtless organs of divine intent,
Some scanty tribes in rudest union blent
Defensive force and martial will combined,
Till lust of conquest filled them, like a mind;
Then fast the mustard-tree of power up-grew,
Fed into strength by Fortune's choicest dew,
Gathered the winds within its ample room,
And gave the swaying boughs a voice of doom,
For ever striving, as none else had striven,
Earth for its root, and for its branches Heaven.*

And when the flush of life was passed,—when came
Age's dry heart and Winter's naked shame,—

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* "You cannot plant an Oak in a flower-pot;—she must have Earth for her root, and Heaven for her branches."—HARRINGTON—OCEANA.

The conscious giant trembled at the spell,
Bowed his high head in agony, and fell.
That ruin is before us,—and we all
Have felt the shock of that tremendous fall
Within our quivering hearts; we all have seen
Those temples altarless, and streets grass-green,
And columns standing lone, and basements bare,
And fragments crumbling in the new-found air;
And, if at last our thought found utterance, said,
"Surely this is the City of the Dead!"

I stood one night,—one rich Italian night,
When the Moon's lamp was prodigal of light,—
Within that Circus, whose enormous range,
Tho' rent and shattered by a life of change,
Still stretches forth its undiminished span,
Telling the weakness and the strength of Man.
In that vague hour which magnifies the great,
When Desolation seems most desolate,
I thought not of the rushing crowds of yore,
Who filled with din the vasty corridor;
Those hunters of fierce pleasure are swept by,
And host on host has trampled where they lie.
But where is He, that stood so strong and bold,
In his thick armour of enduring gold,
Whose massive form irradiant as the sun,
Baptized the work his glory beamed upon

With his own name, Colossal?—From the day
Has that sublime illusion shrunk away,
Leaving a blank weed-matted Pedestal
Of his high place the sole memorial?—
And is this miracle of imperial power,
The chosen of his tutelage, hour by hour,
Following his doom, and Rome, alive,—awake?
Weak mother! orphaned as thou art, to take
From Fate this sordid boon of lengthened life,
Of most unnatural life, which is not life,
As *thou* wert used to live; oh! rather stand
In thy green waste, as on the palm-flecked sand,
Old Tadmor,* hiding not its death;—a tomb,
Haunted by sounds of life, is none the less a tomb.—
Then from that picture of the wreck-strewn ground,
Which the arch held in frame-work, slowly round
I turned my eyes and fixed them, where was seen
A long spare shadow stretched across the green,
The shadow of the Crucifix,—that stood,
A simple shape of rude uncarven wood,
Raising, erect and firm, its lowly head
Amid that pomp of ruin,—amid the dead,
A sign of salient life;—the Mystery
Of Rome's immortal being was then made clear to me.

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* Tadmor signifies the "City of the Palm-grove,"—hence the Roman appellation.

THE PAPAL BENEDICTION,

FROM ST. PETER'S.

HIGHER than ever lifted into space,
Rises the sovereign dome,—
Into the Colonnade's immense embrace
Flows all the life of Rome;

The assembled peasants of a hundred mountains,
Beneath the Sun's clear disk,
Behold that peerless whole of radiant Fountains,—
Exorcised Obelisk,—

And massive Front, from whose high ridge outslanted,
A spacious awning fell;—
The swaying breadth each gazer's breast enchanted
To follow its slow swell.

Why are they met in their collective might,
That earnest multitude?
Is it to vindicate some injured right,
By threat and clamour rude?

To watch with tip-toe foot and eager eye
Some mere device of Pride,
Meaningless pomp of regal vanity
The void of Truth to hide?

To feed some popular lust which cautious power
Would, for wise ends, restrain,
Not bartering to the passion of an hour
What ages toiled to gain?

Thanks, thanks to Heaven, that in these evil days,
Days of hard hearts and cold,
Days where no love is found in all our ways,
Where Man is overbold,

And loathes all tender mutual offices,
And nothing old reveres,
Unwilling to be seen upon his knees,
Ashamed of his own tears,—

My soul the gracious privilege of this sight,
This priceless sight, has won,
A people of too simple faith to slight
A Father's benison;—

Not in low flattery, not in selfish dread,
Before one meek old man,
A People, a whole People, prostrated,
Infant and veteran.

By that High-Priest in prelude of deep prayer
Implored and sanctified,
The benediction of paternal care
Can never be denied.

Most surely from that narrow gallery
The oriflamme unfurled,
Shelters within its grand benignity
Rome and the orbèd world.

The faintest wretch may catch the dew that falls
From those anointed lips,
And take away a wealth that never palls,
A joy without eclipse.

Old pines! that darkly skirt the circling hills,
Bend down in grateful awe,—
Infuse the earth's dry heart, prolific rills!
With Love's unbroken law.

Bear the glad tidings to your sister seas,
Mediterranean waves!
Let every muttering storm be hushed in peace,
Silent the thunderous caves!

And would my spirit from Earth's embasing rule
Were in this moment riven!
That I might pass through such fit vestibule
Up to the face of Heaven!

SIR WALTER SCOTT AT THE TOMB OF THE STUARTS IN ST. PETER'S.*

EVE's tinted shadows slowly fill the fane
Where Art has taken almost Nature's room,
While still two objects clear in light remain,
An alien pilgrim at an alien tomb.—

—A sculptured tomb of regal heads discrown'd,
Of one heart-worshipped, fancy-haunted, name,
Once loud on earth, but now scarce else renown'd
Than as the offspring of that stranger's fame.

There lie the Stuarts!—There lingers Walter Scott!
Strange congress of illustrious thoughts and things!
A plain old moral, still too oft forgot,—
The power of Genius and the fall of Kings.

* When Sir Walter Scott was at Rome, the year of his death, the history and localities of the Stuarts seemed to absorb all other objects of his interest. The circumstance of this poem fell within the observation of the writer.

The curse on lawless Will high-planted there,
A beacon to the world, shines not for him ;
He is with those who felt their life was sere,
When the full light of loyalty grew dim.

He rests his chin upon a sturdy staff,
Historic as that sceptre, theirs no more ;
His gaze is fixed ; his thirsty heart can quaff,
For a short hour the spirit-draughts of yore.

Each figure in its pictured place is seen,
Each fancied shape his actual vision fills,
From the long-pining, death-delivered, Queen,
To the worn Outlaw of the heathery hills.

O grace of life, which shame could never mar !
O dignity, that circumstance defied !
Pure is the neck that wears the deathly scar,
And sorrow has baptised the front of pride.

But purpled mantle, and blood-crimson'd shroud,
Exiles to suffer and returns to woo,
Are gone, like dreams by daylight disallow'd ;
And their historian,—he is sinking too !

A few more moments and that labouring brow
Cold as those royal busts and calm will lie ;
And, as on them his thoughts are resting now,
His marbled form will meet the attentive eye.

Thus, face to face, the dying and the dead,
Bound in one solemn ever-living bond,
Communed; and I was sad that ancient head
Ever should pass those holy walls beyond.

THE ILLUMINATIONS OF ST. PETER'S.

I.

FIRST ILLUMINATION.

Temple! where Time has wed Eternity,
How beautiful Thou art, beyond compare,
Now emptied of thy massive majesty,
And made so faery-frail, so faery-fair:
The lineaments that thou art wont to wear
Augustly traced in ponderous masonry,
Lie faint as in a woof of filmy air,
Within their frames of mellow jewelry.—
But yet how sweet the hardly-waking sense,
That when the strength of hours has quenched those gems,
Disparted all those soft-bright diadems,—
Still in the Sun thy form will rise supreme
In its own solid clear magnificence,
Divinest substance then, as now divinest dream.

THE SAME.

TRANSLATED BY C. J. M'C.

TEMPIO! che 'l ciel con quest' angusto mondo
E 'l tempo coll' eternità mariti,
Dì quai bellezze nuove il viso inondo
Or che mite e fral tu lo sguardo inviti!
Sorridòn sciolti sotto vel profondo
Quei tratti già da fermo sasso uniti,
Telá di luce sol ti fa giocondo,—
Sol di gemme, dì fiamma, e' son vestiti.
Eppur che gioia nel pensier segreto
Che quando l' avide Ore e l' invidioso
Sol spegneran quel fregio, or si pomposo,
Tu non perciò vedrai a te rovina,
Ma sempre stai eterno e chiaro e lieto,
Or divin sogno, or realtà divina!

II.

SECOND ILLUMINATION.

MY heart was resting with a peaceful gaze,
So peaceful that it seemed I well could die
Entranced before such Beauty,—when a cry
Burst from me, and I sunk in dumb amaze:

The molten stars before a withering blaze
Paled to annihilation, and my eye,
Stunned by the splendour, saw against the sky
Nothing but light,—sheer light,—and light's own haze.
At last that giddying Sight took form,—and then
Appeared the stable Vision of a Crown,
From the black vault by unseen Power let down,
Cross-topped,—thrice girt with flame :—
Cities of men,
Queens of the Earth! bow low,—was ever brow
Of mortal birth adorned as Rome is now?

III.

REFLECTION.

PAST is the first dear phantom of our sight,
A loadstar of calm loveliness to draw
All souls from out this world of fault and flaw,
To a most perfect centre of delight,
Merged in deep fire ;—our joy is turned to awe,
Delight to wonder. This is just and right ;—
A greater light puts out the lesser light,—
So be it ever,—such is God's high law.
The self-same Sun that calls the flowers from earth
Withers them soon, to give the fruit free birth ;—

The nobler Spirit to whom much is given
Must take still more, though in that more there lie
The risk of losing All;—to gaze at Heaven,
We blind our earthly eyes;—to live we die.

THE FIREWORKS

FROM THE CASTLE OF ST. ANGELO.

PLAY on, play on, I share your gorgeous glee,
Creatures of elemental mirth! play on,—
Let each fulfil his marvellous destiny,
My heart leaps up and falls in unison.
The Tower round which ye weave, with elfin grace,
The modulations of your burning dance,
Looks through your gambols with a grandsire's face,
A grave but not reproachful countenance;
Ye are the children of a festive night,
He is the mate of many an hundred years,—
Ye but attest men's innocent delight,
He is the comrade of their crimes and tears,—
Ye in your joys' pure prime will flare away,
He waits his end in still and slow decay.

ON THE MARRIAGE OF THE LADY GWENDOLIN TALBOT WITH THE ELDEST SON OF THE PRINCE BORGHESE.

LADY! to decorate thy marriage-morn,
Rare gems, and flowers, and lofty songs are brought;
Thou the plain utterance of a Poet's thought,
Thyself at heart a Poet, wilt not scorn:
The name, into whose splendour thou wert born,
Thou art about to change for that which stands
Writ on the proudest work* that mortal hands
Have raised from earth, Religion to adorn.
Take it rejoicing,—take with thee thy dower,
Britain's best blood, and Beauty ever new,
Being of mind; may the cool northern dew
Still rest upon thy leaves, transplanted flower!
Mingling thy English nature, pure and true,
With the bright growth of each Italian hour.

Rome, May 11th, 1835.

* St. Peter's.

ON THE DEATH OF THE PRINCESS BORGHESE,

AT ROME, NOVEMBER, 1840.

ONCE, and but once again I dare to raise
A voice which thou in spirit still may'st hear,
Now that thy bridal bed becomes a bier,
Now that thou canst not blush at thine own praise!
The ways of God are not as our best ways,
And thus we ask, with a convulsive tear,
Why is this northern blossom low and sere?
Why has it blest the south but these few days?
Another Basilic,* decked otherwise
Than that which hailed thee as a princely bride,
Receives thee and three little ones beside;
While the young lord of that late glorious home
Stands 'mid these ruins and these agonies,
Like some lone column of his native Rome!

* S. Maria Maggiore, where the Borghese family are interred.

ROMAN RUINS.

How could Rome live so long, and now be dead?
How came this waste and wilderness of stones?
How shows the orbèd monster, so long fed
On martyr-blood, his bare and crumbling bones?
Did the strong Faith, that built eight hundred years
Of world-dominion on a robber's name,
Once animate this corse, and fervent seers
Augur it endless life and shadeless fame?
Stranger! if thou a docile heart dost bring
Within thee, bear a timely precept hence;
That Power, mere Power, is but a barren thing,
Even when it seems most like omnipotence;
The forms *must* pass,—and past, they leave behind
Little to please, and nought to bless mankind.

ANTIQUES.

PLATEN.

FREE! let us free,—throw open the doors, lay open the presses,
Here in the dark and the dust is it seemly for *us* to be dwelling?
What we, and where we have been, oh! remember, and give us your pity.
Once this rare old Vase was the pride of the gardens of Egypt,
And Cleopatra herself bade her courtiers fill it with myrtle:—
This so daintily carved,—this duplicate layer of Onyx,
On thy finger, Antinous, rested, a jewel unvalued—
Thine, thou beautiful Boy, too soon sped away to thy heaven.
I, God Hermes, stood in the hall of Cæsar Augustus,—
Breath of the odorous south from crowns of bay was shed o'er me;
Now have Ye piled us together and ranged us in cruel confusion,

Each one pressing his fellow, and each of us shading his brother,—
None in a fitting abode, in the life-giving play of the sunshine!
Wearying even the eyes of gaping and vain "cognoscenti,"
Here in disorder we lie, like desolate bones in a charnel,
Waking, in those that can feel, deep sense of sorrowful yearning
For the magnificent days, when, as all but alive, we were honoured.—
Ye too,—cull ye no roses, no fresh-blowing braids, to be wreathèd
Round the Etrurian vase and brow of the Parian marble?
Ye too,—have ye no temples, no pleachèd arcades in your gardens,
Where ye can take us, and plant us, all near the unperishing heavens,
After our own sweet wont, to the joy of the pious beholder?

ON A SCENE IN TUSCANY.

WHAT good were it to dim the pleasure-glow,
That lights thy cheek, fair Girl, in scenes like these,
By shameful facts, and piteous histories?
While we enjoy, what matters what we know?
What tender love-sick looks on us below
Those Mountains cast! how courteously the Trees
Raise up their branching heads in calices
For the thick Vine to fill and overflow!
This nature is like Thee, all-bright, all-mild;
If then some self-wise man should say, that here
Hate, sin, and death held rule for many a year,
That of this kindliest earth there 's not a rood
But has been saturate with brother's blood,—
Believe him not, believe him not, my Child.

TO WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR,

AGED NINE YEARS.

Sweet, serious Child,—strange Boy! I fain would know
Why, when I fondly talk and sport with thee,
I never miss the exuberant heart-flow
Which is the especial charm of infancy:
Thou art so wise, so sober,—nothing wild,—
I hardly think, yet feel, thou art a child.

For had the formal bondage of a school
Checked the gay outgrowth of thy vernal years,
Encumbered thy light wings with vulgar rule,
And dimmed the blossoms in thy cheeks with tears,—
Thou mightst have been as grave, as still, as now,
But not with that calm smile, that placid brow.

Nor has the knowledge of dull manly things,
And intellect grown ripe before its time,
Defiled thy being's freshly-salient springs,
And made thee conscious of a world of crime;—
With all thy earnest looks, as spirit-free
As ever infant dancing down the lea.

Is it not that within thee, as a shrine,
The power of uncommunicable Art
Is working out its ministry divine,
Silently moulding thy all-virgin heart
To its own solemn ends? Thus dost thou wear
That priestly aspect,—that religious air;

And every circumstance of outward life
Tends this sublime ordainment to unfold;
Is not each chamber of thy dwelling rife
With miracles of purest painters old,—
The Saints and Patriarchs of Art,—who knew
How best to make the Beautiful the True?

Thou hast them all for teachers;—He is there,
The limner cowled,* who never moved his hand
Till he had steeped his inmost soul in prayer:
Him thou art bound to in a special band,
For he was born, and fed his heart, as thou,
On storied Fiesole's fair-folded brow.

There thou canst read, with deeper reverence still,
Rare lessons of the later Monk,† who took
The world with awe of his inspirèd skill,
To which the Apostle leaning on his book,

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* Fra Beato Angelico di Fiesole.

† Fra Bartolomeo, commonly called the "Frate."

And those three marvels in old Lucca shown,
Bear witness, in the days we call our own.

There too Masaccio's grandly-plain design,—
  Quaint Ghirlandaio,—and the mighty pair,*
Master and pupil, who must ever shine
  Consociate Sovereigns—thy preceptors are ;
Nor pass him by, who with grave lines looks down
Upon thee, Michel of the triple crown. †

Thou hast a Sire, whose full-experienced eye
  Keeps harmony with an unerring heart,—
Who, of that glorified society,
  To thy young sense can every depth impart :
How dare I then deny thy perfect joy ?
How dare *I* judge thee, thou unearthly Boy ?

Fiesole, 1833.

* Pietro Perugino and Raffaello.
† As Painter, Sculptor, and Poet.

AN INCIDENT AT PISA.

"FROM the common burial-ground
Mark'd by some peculiar bound,
Beppo! who are these that lie
Like one numerous family?"

"They whose bodies rest within
This appointed place,
Signor! never knew of sin,
Only knew of grace.
Purified from earthly leaven,
They have mounted straight to heaven,
Without sorrow, without thrall,
Blessed children, angels all!"

"But that second space, with art
Fenc'd from all the rest apart,
Though from those sweet infants' bed
By a low wall separated—
Beppo! who are these, and why
To the others laid so nigh?"

"Signor! they who moulder here,
Be it wrong or right,
Shake with many a pang of fear
Passers-by at night:
Men of passion, vice, and pride,
Who in evil liv'd and died,
Unrepentant, unconfess'd,
By the sacraments unbless'd;
Though with these are mingled some
That deserv'd a better doom,
When by sudden death waylaid,
Ere their peace with God was made:
But why they who guiltless die
By those reprobates should lie,
Signor! the priest may know, not I."

In these words the truth discerning,
Much I ponder'd, home returning,
Whether chance or wise design
Drew this thin dividing line,
Almost blending in this close
Old decay and young repose;
Almost laying side by side
Those who hardly liv'd and died,
And the wretched ones for whom
Life has been a very tomb.

Oh! if in our utmost need
Love has power to intercede—
If between us and our foes
Innocence may interpose—
May not they, who dare not claim
Pardon in the church's name,
By some sweet and secret law
From these little neighbours draw
Blessings such as nature gave
To the angel-ruffled wave;
Finding a Bethesda's worth
In this angel-planted earth?

NAPLES AND VENICE.

Overlooking, overhearing, Naples and her subject bay,
Stands Camaldoli, the convent, shaded from the inclement ray.

Thou, who to that lofty terrace, lov'st on summer-eve to go,
Tell me, Poet! what Thou seest,—what Thou hearest, there below!

Beauty, beauty, perfect beauty! Sea and City, Hills and Air,
Rather blest imaginations than realities of fair.

Forms of grace alike contenting casual glance and stedfast gaze,
Tender lights of pearl and opal mingling with the diamond blaze.

Sea is but as deepen'd æther: white as snow-wreaths sunbeshone
Lean the Palaces and Temples green and purple heights upon.

Streets and paths mine eye is tracing, all replete with clamorous throng,
Where I see and where I see not, waves of uproar roll along.

As the sense of bees unnumber'd, burning through the walk of limes,—
As the thought of armies gathering round a chief in ancient times,—

So from Corso, Port, and Garden, rises Life's tumultuous strain,
Not secure from wildest utterance rests the perfect-crystal main.

Still the all-enclosing Beauty keeps my spirit free from harm,
Distance blends the veriest discords into some melodious charm.

--OVERLOOKING, overhearing, Venice and her sister isles,
Stands the giant Campanile massive 'mid a thousand piles.

Thou who to this open summit lov'st at every hour to go,
Tell me, Poet! what Thou seest, what Thou hearest, there below.

Wonder, wonder, perfect wonder! Ocean is the City's moat;
On the bosom of broad Ocean seems the mighty weight to float:

Seems—yet stands as strong and stable as on land e'er city shall,—
Only moves that Ocean-serpent, tide-impelled, the Great Canal.

Rich arcades and statued pillars, gleaming banners, burnished domes,—
Ships approaching,—ships departing,—countless ships in harbour-homes.

Yet so silent! scarce a murmur winged to reach this airy seat,
Hardly from the close Piazza rises sound of voice or feet.

Plash of oar or single laughter,—cry or song of Gondolier,—
Signals far between to tell me that the work of life is here.

Like a glorious maiden dreaming music in the drowsy heat,
Lies the City, unbetokening where its myriad pulses beat.

And I think myself in cloudland,—almost try my power of will,
Whether I can change the picture, or it must be Venice still.

When the question wakes within me, which hath won the crown of deed,
Venice with her moveless silence, Naples with her noisy speed?

Which hath writ the goodlier tablet for the past to hoard and show,
Venice in her student stillness, Naples in her living glow?

Here are Chronicles with virtues studded as the night with stars,—
Records there of passions raging through a wilderness of wars:

There a tumult of Ambitions, Power afloat on blood and tears,—
Here one simple reign of Wisdom stretching thirteen hundred years:

Self-subsisting, self-devoted, there the moment 's Hero ruled,—
Here the State, each one subduing, pride enchained and passion schooled:

Here was Art the nation's mistress, Art of colour, Art of stone—
There before the leman Pleasure bowed the people's soul alone.

Venice! vocal is thy silence, can our soul but rightly hear;
Naples! dumb as death thy voices, listen we however near.

CANNÆ.

SAVE where Garganus, with low-ridgèd bound,
Protects the North, the eye outstretching far
Surveys one sea of gently-swelling ground,
A fitly-moulded "Orchestra of War."

Here Aufidus, between his humble banks
With wild thyme plotted, winds along the plain,
A devious path, as when the serried ranks
Passed over it, that passed not back again.

The long-horned herds enjoy the cool delight,
Sleeping half-merged, to shun the deep sun-glow,
Which, that May-morning,* dazed the Roman sight,
But fell innocuous on the subtler foe.

We feel the wind upon our bosoms beat,
That whilom dimmed with dust those noble eyes,†
And rendered aimless many a gallant feat,
And brought disgrace on many a high emprise.

* The battle was fought on the 21st of May, B. C. 216.
† Vulturnus, a south-east wind, probably a local name.

And close beside us rests the ancient well,*
Where at the end of that accursed day,
Apulian peasants to their grandsons tell,
The friend and follower of wise Fabius lay;

Here fainting lay, compelled by fate to share
Shame not his own,—here spurned the scanty time
Still left for flight, lest, living, he might bear
Hard witness to his colleague's generous crime.†

I have seen many fields where men have fought
With mightier issues, but not one, I deem,
Where history offers to reflecting thought,
So sharp a check of greatness so supreme.

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* The only localities preserved in the tradition are this large fountain which goes by the name of the "Consul's Well," and "The Place of Blood," a farm-house on the other side of the river, where they say the Roman prisoners were massacred.

† Abi, nuncia publice patribus urbem Romam muniant . . . . . privatimque Fabio, L. Æmilium præceptorum ejus memorem extitisse, et vixisse, et adhuc mori; et tu me, in hac strage militum meorum, patere exspirare, ne ut reus interream, causâque consulatus accusator collegæ existam, ut alieno crimine innocentiam meam protegam. Liv. xxii.

ON LEAVING ITALY,

FOR THE SUMMER, ON ACCOUNT OF HEALTH.

THOU summer-land! that dost put on the sun
Not as a dress of pomp occasional,
But as thy natural and most fitting one,—
Yet still thy Beauty has its festival,
Its own chief day,
And I, though conscious of the bliss begun,
Must turn away!

I leave thee in thy royallest attire
Of affluent life,—I leave thee 'mid thy wealth
Of sunlight gold and jewels of all fire,—
Led by the paltry care of weakened health
And fear of pain;
Who knows that I shall see, ere I expire,
Thy face again!

I almost could persuade me that too dear
My Northern-island birthdom has been bought,
The vantage-ground of intellect, the clear
And bright expanse of action and of thought,

If I am bound
To limit all the good my heart has sought
To that cold ground.

What is my gain that I can take and mesh
The Beautiful in Nature's deepest sea,
If I am bound the bondman of the flesh,
And must not float upon the surface free ?
Why should these powers
Bring nothing but a burden ever fresh
Of yearning hours ?

Why do we wish the things we do not dare ?
Why do I tremble at my æstuous Soul
That would embrace the burning god, and there
Give up into the elemental whole
Its worthless frame,
Whose instincts guide me captive everywhere,
In grief and shame ?

Oh ! what a world of strifes of good and ill
Is this that we are cast in ? Head and Heart,
Body and Spirit, Faculties and Will,
Nothing at peace, all sundered and apart ;
Who would not shun
This war, if Death were *sure* to make him still,
Or make him One !

SWITZERLAND AND ITALY.

WITHIN the Switzer's varied land,
When Summer chases high the snow,
You 'll meet with many a youthful band
Of strangers wandering to and fro:
Through hamlet, town, and healing bath,
They haste and rest as chance may call,
No day without its mountain-path,
No path without its waterfall.

They make the hours themselves repay,
However well or ill be shared,
Content that they should wing their way,
Unchecked, unreckoned, uncompared:
For though the hills unshapely rise,
And lie the colours poorly bright,—
They mould them by their cheerful eyes,
And paint them with their spirit's light.

Strong in their youthfulness, they use
The energies their souls possess ;
And if some wayward scene refuse
To pay its part of loveliness,—
Onward they pass, nor less enjoy
For what they leave ;—and far from me
Be every thought that would destroy
A charm of that simplicity !

But if *one* blot on that white page
From Doubt or Misery's pen be thrown,—
If *once* the sense awake, that Age
Is counted not by years alone,—
Then no more grand and wondrous things !
No active happinesses more !
The wounded Heart has lost its wings,
And change can only fret the sore.

Yet there is calm for those that weep,
Where the divine Italian sea
Rests like a maiden hushed asleep
And breathing low and measuredly ;
Where all the sunset-purpled ground,
Fashioned by those delicious airs,
Seems strewed with softest cushions round
For weary heads to loose their cares :

Where Nature offers, at all hours,
Out of her free imperial store,
That perfect Beauty their weak powers
Can help her to create no more :
And grateful for that ancient aid,
Comes forth to comfort and relieve
Those minds in prostrate sorrow laid,
Bidding them open and receive !

Though still 'tis hardly she that gives,
For Nature reigns not there alone,
A mightier queen beside her lives,
Whom she can serve but not dethrone ;
For she is fallen from the state
That waited on her Eden-prime,
And Art remains by Sin and Fate
Unscathed, for Art is not of Time.

OTHER SCENES.

Though blank the range of place and fact
To hearts that only rise and fall,
God and the Poet can extract
Beauty and Truth from each and all.

THE DEATH OF DAY.

WRITTEN ON THE RHINE.

FULL of hours, the Day is falling
Where its brethren lie,—
A stern and royal voice is calling
The beautiful to die.

The banners of the west
A splendid breadth unfold,—
Their glory be unblest!
There is blood upon the gold.

Great Time, how canst thou slay,
With such a funeral state,
The gay and gentle Day,
Whom none could fear or hate?

Oh! mark him on his bed,
How flushed his quiet cheek,
How lowly droops his head,
And eyes that more than speak.

Let not the giddy breeze
Make sport of his last moans ;
Weave them, ye aged trees !
Into Æolian tones.

The hills, in clear outline,
Against the blanching sky,
Stand forth, nor seem to pine
For the joy that is passing by,

But solemnly and boldly
They bid a sad farewell,
Nor feel the pain more coldly
They are too proud to tell.

Yet leaves and blossoms pray
One deep and constant prayer :
" Take him not all away,
That made us seem so fair ;

" Say not, that, in its turn,
'T is pleasant to behold
The lamp of darkness burn
Light-amber or red-gold ;

" Praise not the coming night,
Its damp and sallow ray,
We would not call it bright,
Tho' it came not after Day.

"We have wept when Day was sighing,—
His gloom has made us mourn,—
And now our love is dying,
What care we for the born?"

ON A RUINED CASTLE,

NEAR THE RHINE.

THIS was a fortress, firm and stout,
When there was battling round about,—
It has been decked in gala-plight,
In days of ladie-love and knight,—
It has known carouse and Provençal song,
And the dance right featly tript along,
While the red yuhl-log and wassail bowl
Cheered the pilgrim's thirsty soul.
The swoop of Time has been to it
A bounty and a benefit,—
It has gained glory from those wings,
Which have annihilated Kings;
And now it stands in its massiveness,
Wi' the scars of many an age,
Like a lore-encumbered prophetess,
Who has worn away her youthfulness,
In studies deep and sage.

ON THE JUNGFRAU BY MOONLIGHT.

THE maiden moon is resting the maiden mount above,
They gaze upon each other with cold majestic love.

So I and Thou, sweet Sister! upon each other gaze;
Our love was warm, but sorrow has tempered its fine rays.

As in the hazy heaven that gentle orb appears,
Thou lookest in my face tearful—not shedding tears.

Like thine her face is pale, but from within a light
Mild-gleaming as thy spirit, still glorifies the night,

And casts a tender sheen on that pale hill beneath,
Pale as my heart which wears the shroud of early Death

WRITTEN IN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE TYROL.

A HEART the world of men had bound and sealed
With shameful stamp and miserable chain,
Here, mother Nature! is to Thee revealed,
Open to Thee; oh! be it not in vain.
Flow over it, ye Torrents!—though I fear,
That be your course as fierce as e'er it may,
The sorrow-stains engrained there many a year
Your force can never, never, wash away:
Then come, ye Mountains! ye half-heavenly Forms!
Based in deep lakes and woods, and crowned with storms,
Close on it,—cover,—seal it up again,
But with the signet of your own pure power,
So that unbroken, till the all-searching hour
Of Death, that impress may on it remain.

"In the treasury of the Benedictine Monastery of St. Peter at Salzburg, I was shown a gold and jewel-studded pen, with which every brother, on his entrance into the order, signed his name. This had been the custom for many centuries."—MS. Journal.

THIS dainty instrument, this table-toy,
Might seem best fitted for the use and joy
Of some high Ladie in old gallant times,
Or gay-learned weaver of Provençal rhymes:
With such a pen did sweet Francesca trace
Some hurried lines beneath her blushing face,
And hid them in her lover's doublet sleeve,
To let him know, that, ere to-morrow eve,
They would enjoy the luscious summer-weather,
And read their favourite Launcelot together;
With such a pen did tremulous Mary write
To bid good Chatelet come and play to-night;
And so we might go on for hours, and fold
Our colouring fancies round this ancient gold;
But here one stern Reality appears,
And leaves no place for other dreams or tears,—
The simple record, that, with this one pen,

Have hundreds of our brothers, fellow-men,
Signed by their names the awfullest decree
That between them and all the world could be;
Those few small letters, when thus written, said—
"The writer, though he live, is living dead;
The world of man, of beauty, and of bloom,
This visible earth, but serves him for a tomb,—
He feels no more its glories or its gains,
His soul can only know its purging pains,—
Here from the trails of sin however sure,
He needs that suffering to be perfect-pure."

Think of the fingers that have dared to hold
This fateful relic! Some with grasp so bold,
You would believe that nothing but the pride
Of glory won, ambition satisfied,
Or joy of meed long toiled for, could command
Such full composure in an aged hand:
And yet the most of those, who hither brought
Their Being's sacrifice were men well taught
In the world's wisdom, men who had lived through
All that life gives to suffer and to do;
Who had grown old in wars of spirit and arm,
But found in Victory no victorious charm
Against the clouding armament of Ill,
Licensed on earth by God's unsounded will.
Some might be young,—by strange heart-prescience led
To know that Life is but a sick man's bed,

On which, with aching head and limbs, we lie
Through the hot Night of our humanity,
Waiting for Death, our Lucifer,—so blest
Is he, through whose deep-drugged and senseless rest
No Dreams can pierce,—and thus they did but crave
To seek this stupor in the cloisteral grave;
These held the Pen, as valour holds a sword
Against the foe that doubted of its word;
Yet others still might be,—young too and fair,
Strong too, but only strengthened by Despair,
Who,—when that closing moment came at last,
That one thin line, which lay between the Past
And the unknown bleak Future,—that deep trench,
Which, now leapt over, by a fearful wrench
Of almost natural instincts, held the soul,
Once the world's freeman, once without controul
Working and wandering, bound to a new law,
Captive in Faith and prisoner in Awe,—
Caught up this Pen, and quiveringly traced
he names, that thence could never be effaced,
With moveless eyes and pale-blue lips convulsed,
As if the salient blood were all repulsed
To its free source,—as if within their clutch
They had a poisoned dagger, and its touch
Was on their living flesh;—yet they, even they,
Found in these precincts Joy, we will not say,
But, what is better, Peace;—they asked no more;
Happy the wave that breaks upon the shore!

THE RIVER TRAUN.

WRITTEN IN LOMBARDY.

The Traun rises in the mountains of Upper Austria, and loses itself in the Danube above Linz. Its course is remarkable for the combination of the best features of Alpine scenery with the grace and elegance of the Southern landscape.

My heart is in a mountain mood,
Though I am bound to tread the plain,
She will away for ill or good,—
I cannot lure her back again;
So let her go,—God speed her flight
O'er teeming glebe and columned town,
I know that she will rest ere night,
By the remembered banks of Traun.

And she will pray her sister Muse,
Sister, companion, friend, and guide,
Her every art and grace to use,
For love of that well-cherished tide;

But words are weak,—she cannot reach
By such poor steps that Beauty's crown ;
How can the Muse to *others* teach
What were to me the banks of Traun ?

She can repeat the faithful tale
That " where thy genial waters flow,
All objects the rare crystal hail,
And cast their voices far below ;
And there the stedfast echoes rest,
Till the old Sun himself goes down,
Till darkness falls on every breast,
Even on thine, transparent Traun ! "

And she can say, " Where'er thou art,
Brawling 'mid rocks, or calm-embayed,
Outpouring thy abundant heart
In ample lake or deep cascade,—
Whatever dress thy sides adorn,
Fresh-dewy leaves or fir-stems brown,
Or ruby-dripping barbery thorn,
Thou art thyself, delightful Traun !

" No glacier-mountains, harshly bold,
Whose peaks disturb the summer air,
And make the gentle blue so cold,
And hurt our warmest thoughts, are there ;

But upland meadows, lush with rills,
Soft-green as is the love-bird's down,
And quaintest forms of pine-clad hills,
Are thy fit setting, jewelled Traun !"

But the wise Muse need not be told,
Though fair and just her song may seem,
The same has oft been sung of old,
Of many a less deserving stream ;
For where would be the worth of sight,
If Love could feed on blank renown ?
They who have loved the Traun aright
Have sat beside the banks of Traun.

MONT BLANC.

MOUNT ! I have watched thee, at the fall of dew,
Array thee in thy panoply of gold,—
And then cast over it thy rosy vest,—
And last that awful robe that looks so cold,
Thy ghastly spectre-dress of nameless hue :
Then thou art least of earth, and then I love thee best.

ON

THE CHURCH OF THE MADELEINE, AT PARIS.

I.

THE Attic temple whose majestic room
Contained the presence of Olympian Jove,
With smooth Hymettus round it and above,
Softening the splendour by a sober bloom,
Is yielding fast to Time's irreverent doom;
While on the then barbarian banks of Seine
That nobler type is realised again
In perfect form, and dedicate—to whom?
To a poor Syrian girl, of lowliest name,
A hapless creature, pitiful and frail
As ever wore her life in sin and shame,—
Of whom all history has this single tale,—
"She loved the Christ, she wept beside his grave,
And He, for that Love's sake, all else forgave."

II.

If one, with prescient soul to understand
The working of this world beyond the day
Of his small life, had taken by the hand
That wanton daughter of old Magdala;
And told her that the time was ripe to come
When she, thus base among the base, should be
More served than all the Gods of Greece and Rome,
More honoured in her holy memory,—
How would not men have mocked and she have scorned
The fond Diviner?—Plausible excuse
Had been for them, all moulded to one use
Of feeling and of thought, but We are warned
By such ensamples to distrust the sense
Of Custom proud and bold Experience.

III.

Thanks to that element of heavenly things,
That did come down to earth, and there confound
Most sacred thoughts with names of usual sound,
And homeliest life with all a Poet sings.
The proud Ideas that had ruled and bound
Our moral nature were no longer kings,
Old Power grew faint and shed his eagle-wings,

And grey Philosophy was half uncrowned.
Love, Pleasure's child, betrothed himself to Pain ;—
Weakness, and Poverty, and Self-disdain,
And tranquil sufferance of repeated wrongs,
Became adorable ;—Fame gave her tongues,
And Faith her hearts to objects all as low
As this lorn child of infamy and woe.

IMPRESSION,

ON RETURNING TO ENGLAND.

In just accordance with attentive sight,
Through airy space and round our planet ball,
The inorganic world is voiced with Light,
And Colours are the words it speaks withal.
Thus has my eye had glad experience
Of that most perfect utterance and clear tone,
With which all visible things address the sense,
In lands retiring from the northern zone.
But, oh ! in what poor language, faintly caught,
Do the old features of my England greet
Her stranger-son ! how powerless,—how unmeet
For the free vision Italy had taught
What to expect from Nature ; I must scan
Her face, I fear, no more, and look alone to Man.

TO AN ENGLISH LADY,

WHO HAD SUNG A ROMAN BALLAD.

BLAME not my vacant looks; it is not true,
That my discourteous thoughts did vainly stray
Out of the presence of your gentle lay,
While other eager listeners nearer drew,
Though sooth I hardly heard a note; for you,
Most cunning songstress, did my soul convey
Over the fields of space, far, far away,
To the dear garden-land, where long it grew.
Thus, all that time, beneath the ilex roof
Of an old Alban hill, I lay aloof,
With the cicala faintly clittering near,
Till, as your song expired, the clouds that pass
Athwart the Roman plain, as o'er a glass,
Thickened, and bade the Vision disappear.

ON REVISITING CAMBRIDGE,

AFTER A LONG ABSENCE ON THE CONTINENT.

Nor few, nor poor in beauty, my resorts
In foreign climes,—nor negligent or dull
My observation, but these long-left courts
I still find beautiful, most beautiful!
And fairly are they more so than before;
For to my eye, fresh from a southern land,
They wear the colouring of the scenes of yore,
And the old Faith that made them here to stand.
I paint the very students as they were,
Not the men-children of these forward days,
But mild-eyed boys just risen from their knees,
While, proud as angels of their holy care,
Following the symbol-vested priest, they raise
The full response of antique litanies.

THE SAME.

I HAVE a debt of my heart's own to Thee,
School of my Soul, old lime and cloister shade,
Which I, strange suitor, should lament to see
Fully acquitted and exactly paid.
The first ripe taste of manhood's best delights,
Knowledge imbibed, while mind and heart agree,
In sweet belated talk on winter nights,
With friends whom growing time keeps dear to me,—
Such things I owe thee, and not only these:
I owe thee the far beaconing memories
Of the young dead, who, having crossed the tide
Of Life where it was narrow, deep, and clear,
Now cast their brightness from the further side
On the dark-flowing hours I breast in fear.

ON COWPER'S GARDEN AT OLNEY.

FROM this forlornest place, at morn and even,
Issues a voice imperative, "Begone,
All ye that let your vermin thoughts creep on
Beneath the unheeded thunders of high Heaven;
Nor welcome they, who, when free grace is given
To flee from usual life's dominion,
Soon as the moving scene or time is gone,
Return, like penitents unfitly shriven.
But Ye, who long have wooed the memory
Of this great Victim of sublime despair,
Encompassed round with evil as with air,
Yet crying, "God is good, and sinful He,"—
Remain, and feel how better 'tis to drink
Of Truth to Madness even than shun that fountain's brink."

ROCHE ROCK, CORNWALL.

WHEN all these order'd fields were one wet moor,
This Rock, that is for us a single sight
Of wonderment and picturesque delight,
Was the salvation of the wandering Poor ;
The Hermit here supported to his door
The tottering steps invited by the light
That, as a lower star, transpierc'd the night,
And gave a blessed rest on that hard floor ;
Yet have we now a compensating gain—
The Rock has long return'd to nature's use,
Dismantled of its humanising power ;
But, 'mid the civilised and fertile plain,
We gaily climb or pleasurably muse
On God's protection of each opening hour.

TINTERN ABBEY.

THE Men who called their passion piety,
And wrecked this noble argosy of faith,—
They little thought how beauteous could be Death,
How fair the face of Time's aye-deepening sea!
Nor arms that desolate, nor years that flee,
Nor hearts that fail, can utterly deflower
This grassy floor of sacramental power,
Where we now stand communicants—even We,
We of this latter, still protéstant age,
With priestly ministrations of the Sun
And Moon and multitudinous quire of stars
Maintain this consecration, and assuage
With tender thoughts the past of weary wars,
Masking with good that ill which cannot be undone.

THE CAVE OF THE DYING DEER,

ON THE BANKS OF ULLSWATER.

To our instructed patient-seeking eyes
Each day reveals the outer world more clear,
Yet Life and Death, Nature's solemnities,
Darkly as through a glass alone appear ;
Whether the thing to scan
Be meditative Man
Or the poor instincts of a dying Deer.

Vex not the inland summer-calm with storms,
Beauteous Ullswater ! be as calm and grave
As when the snows invest the mountain forms,
And thy black crystal sleeps without a wave ;
Triumphant Aira Force !
Hold in thy torrent-course,—
Let Nature pity where she cannot save.

The noblest Stag of all Gowbarrow's park
Is struck, but by no mortal hunter's hand ;
There is no hound to see, no horn to hark,
Yet are his legs too weary-weak to stand :

The antlers on his front
Hang heavy, that were wont
To rise rejoicing in their large command.

Now up the cliff he tries a sharp short bound,
Expiring action of his speedy pride,
And but once gazing pitifully round
The tangled bramble-heap he tears aside,
Seeking his solemn grave
Within the same lone Cave,
Where, through recorded time, his sires have died.

Sons of the greenwood and free mountain air,
Children of open life and herding ways,
Why should they seek this solitary lair,
Soon as their conscious energy decays?
How should they one and all
Select this common pall
Of cold damp rock for their departing days?

There is an ill repute of all that kind,
That, when the leader of the troop is weak
With age or wounds, at once both stag and hind
The wrongs of years on his poor members wreak;
Yet here it is not so,—
For mark his pace, how slow!
And all their looks, how sorrowful and meek!

Rather believe that to that voiceless creat ure
The decencies of Death are someway known,
That on the remnant of his living nature
The Last a shadow of itself has thrown,
Impelling him to teach,
More strongly than by speech,
That Death stands everywhere apart,—alone !

Wisdom incumbent on the heirs of life !
Not visible least in those whose sole behest
Is to enjoy the world of peace or strife,
Holding necessity their only best ;
No part of thee is mean,—
For each, devoutly seen,
Shall aid the pupil Man to read the rest.

ELYSIAN FIELDS AT LOWTHER,

IN WESTMORELAND.

A YOUTH caressed and nurtured long,
Beneath the sky, beside the sea,
Where rules a vivid world of song
The clear-eyed Queen Parthenope,—
And wont to blend with outward grace
The soul Virgilian memory yields,
Might seek with dull, uneager, pace,
The cloudy north's Elysian Fields.

"Lowther," he cried, "of ancient strength
Thy lofty towers the harness wear;—
Thy terraces their mossy length
Extend through centuries of care;
In thine old oaks may Fancy read
A green traditionary chain
Of Worth and Power;—Thou dost not need
To take the classic name in vain."

Up Lowther's banks, that very eve,
This scornful youth was seen to wind
Still tardier steps, that seem'd to grieve
For joy or beauty left behind ;
But ere he reached the lordly roof,
High portal and cathedral stair,
His thoughts in other, fairer, woof,
Were offer'd to the attentive air.

" Not once to Baiæ's column'd bay,
Or Cuma's glade my spirit fled,
While on that storm-cast trunk I lay,
Above yon torrent's stormy bed :
Crystal and green sufficed so well
To solace and delight mine eyes,
They yearn'd for no remember'd spell
Fashion'd beneath serener skies.

" If golden light or azure void
The Poet's radiant dream fulfils,
Are clouds and shadows unenjoy'd,
The ghostly guardians of the hills ?
Nature an open Faith demands,
And we have little else to do
But take the blessing from her hands,
Feeling—*Here* is Elysium too."

ON THE GRAVE OF BISHOP KEN,

AT FROME, IN SOMERSETSHIRE.

LET other thoughts, where'er I roam,
Ne'er from my memory cancel
The coffin-fashioned tomb at Frome
That lies behind the chancel;
A basket-work where bars are bent,
Iron in place of osier,
And shapes above that represent
A mitre and a crosier.

These signs of him that slumbers there
The dignity betoken;
These iron bars a heart declare
Hard bent but never broken;
This form pourtrays how souls like his,
Their pride and passion quelling,
Preferr'd to earth's high palaces
This calm and narrow dwelling.

There with the church-yard's common dust
He loved his own to mingle;
The faith in which he placed his trust
Was nothing rare or single;
Yet laid he to the sacred wall
As close as he was able,
The blessèd crumbs might almost fall
Upon him from God's table.

Who was this Father of the Church,
So secret in his glory?
In vain might antiquarians search
For record of his story;
But preciously tradition keeps
The fame of holy men;
So there the Christian smiles or weeps
For love of Bishop Ken.

A name his country once forsook,
But now with joy inherits,
Confessor in the Church's book,
And Martyr in the Spirit's!
That dared with royal power to cope,
In peaceful faith persisting,
A braver Becket—who could hope
To conquer unresisting!

LONDON CHURCHES.

I STOOD, one Sunday morning,
Before a large church-door,
The congregation gather'd
And carriages a score—
From one outstepp'd a lady
I oft had seen before.

Her hand was on a prayer book,
And held a vinaigrette ;
The sign of man's redemption
Clear on the book was set,—
But above the Cross there glisten'd
A golden Coronet.

For her the obsequious beadle
The inner door flung wide,
Lightly, as up a ball-room,
Her footsteps seemed to glide—
There might be good thoughts in her
For all her evil pride.

But after her a Woman
Peep'd wistfully within,
On whose wan face was graven
Life's hardest discipline—
The trace of the sad trinity
Of weakness, pain, and sin.

The few free-seats were crowded
Where she could rest and pray;
With her worn garb contrasted
Each side in fair array—
"God's house holds no poor sinners,"
She sigh'd, and crept away.

Old Heathendom's vast temples
Held men of every fate;
The steps of far Benares
Commingle small and great;
The dome of Saint Sophia
Confounds all human state.

The aisles of blessed Peter
Are open all the year;
Throughout wide Christian Europe
The Christian's right is clear—
To use God's house in freedom,
Each man the other's peer.

Save only in that England,
Where this disgrace I saw—
England, where no one crouches
In tyranny's base awe—
England, where all are equal
Beneath the eye of Law.

Yet there, too, each Cathedral
Contracts its ample room—
No weary beggar resting
Within the holy gloom—
No earnest student musing
Beside the famous tomb!

Who shall remove this evil
That desecrates our age—
A scandal great as ever
Iconoclastic rage?
Who to this Christian people
Restore their heritage?

IRELAND.

CLIFDEN, IN CUNNEMARA.

HERE the vast daughters of the eastward tide,
Heaved from the bosom of the Atlantic deep,
Lay down the burthen of their mighty forms,
Like some diviner natures of our kind,
Weary with gathered power, and sure to find
Only at once destruction and repose.
Yet no aerial cliff with harsh repulse
Confronts the roving buttresses of sea ;
But on the gentle slant of yielding shores
These wanderers of a world, intent on rest,
Impress their fluent substances, break down
The uneven slope by measureless degrees,
Wear out the line in thousand rugged shapes,
Detached, dissolving, and peninsular,
Now closed within broad circle, like a lake,
Now narrow as a river far inland :
Thence rose the name whose very utterance

Is as an echo of the distant main,
The name of Cunnemara,—Land of Bays.
I stood among those waters and low hills,
Within the circuit of a goodly town,
Furnished with mart and port and church and school,
Meet for the duteous work of social man
And all the uses of commodious life:
While round me circulated, free and wide,
A shifting crowd of almost giant shapes,
Creatures of busy blood and glorious eyes
Andalusian (as beseems the race),
Moulds of magnificent humanity.
Then was I told that twenty years before,
Or less, this spot, thus gay and populous,
Was one unmitigated solitude,
And all this outer wonder brought about
By the mere act of one industrious man!
Thus rolls amain the large material world,
Impelled and energised by human will.

Accord not him alone the Hero's name,
Who weaves the complicate historic woof,
Out of the rough disorder of mankind,
Fashioning nations to his own proud law:
Nor him alone the Poet's, who creates,
In his own chamber, and exclusive spirit,

A universe of beauty, undisturbed
But by serene and sister sympathies.
For He who in one unremitting chain
Of solemn purpose solders link to link
Of active day and meditative night,
And with unquivering heart and hand can meet
Ever distress, ever impediment,
And wring from out a world of checks and flaws
Some palpable and most perspicuous whole
Of realised design and change impressed,
Shall be enrolled among heroic souls,
Though small the scope and slow the growth of deed.

He too, whose care has made some arid soil
Alive with waters of humane delight,
That shall in merry channels gambol on,
Or rest in depths of happy consciousness,—
Has planted and defended in the wild
Some garden of affection, a safe place
For daily love to grow in, and when ripe
To shed sweet seeds, that in their turn will feed
The winds of life with odours, shall be writ
Poet,—Creator, in that book of worth,
Which Nature treasures for the eye of Heaven.

THE SUBTERRANEAN RIVER AT CONG.

A PLEASANT mean of joy and wonder fills
The traveller's mind, beside this secret stream,
That flows from lake to lake beneath the hills,
And penetrates their slumber like a dream.

Untracked by sound or sight it wends its way,
Save where this well-like cave descending far,
Through ivy curtains, lets the uncertain day
Fall on the current and its couch of spar.

A slippery stair will lead you to the brink,
There cast your torch athwart the gleaming tide,
And while you watch the motions of the link
That marries the great waters on each side,—

Think of our common life that glides a span,
In partial light, dark birth and death between,—
Think of the treasures of the heart of man
That once float by us and are no more seen.

Or, for more cheerful mood, let local fame
Recount, how in old time, the faery sprite,
Finvara, or some such melodious name,
Fashioned this channel for her own delight;

And here, distressed at these unloyal days,
Masked in a milk-white fish, still sports along,
And altogether leaves the moonlight rays
For the cool shadow of her Caves of Cong.

"We arrived at the Coleraine Salmon Leap on the 12th of August, just in time to see the last salmon caught,—the fishery there ending that day."
—MS. JOURNAL.

ONE moment more before that fatal leap!
One moment more! and now thou hadst been free
To wanton in the autumn sun or sleep
In the warmed crystal of thy little sea.
I saw thee pant,—I saw the flickering shades
Wander beneath thy silver, loth to die,—
And still their glazèd brilliancy upbraids
The heavens that they permit man's perfidy.
But is it not a weak nor sinless thought,
Since Nature's law thus undisturbed has run,
Heedless of all the same hard fate has wrought,
To pass the myriad and deplore the one?
No, no,—our heart has but a narrow span,
Let it hold all the sympathy it can.

VALENTIA.

A FRAGMENT.

WHERE Europe's varied shore is bent
Out to the utmost Occident,
There rose of old from sea to air,
An island wonderful and fair!

Not that on his way to cheer
Our stranger-sister hemisphere,
Here the Sun is pleased to cast
Liefest smiles, as more his last,
Kinder than he gives to us—
Parting love-looks rubious:
Not that here the wind may fling
Odours from his faithless wing,
Scented breath of heaths and bowers,—
Keepsakes from confiding flowers,—
That the rover may be light
For his long Atlantic flight:—
Not that here the haughty land,
Spurning an assistant hand,

Makes a gracious rivalry
With its fere the hoary sea,
Offering up to regal man
All the loyal gifts it can,
Such is not thy rarity
Thou Island of the Western Sea!

Thy name is of a richer tone
Than our baptismal forms may own,—
A Spanish name, I little doubt,
Yet stands no Spanish lady out
When myriad star-rays mingle o'er
Her rose-emblazoned mirador,
Following with a flattered ear
A voice that follows a guitar,
Too mild and mellowed to be near,
But every precious word so clear,
It cannot come from *very* far.

No relic of gone days is here,
No ancient-minded cavalier,
Who takes his grandson on his knee
And half in play, half earnestly,
Watches the darling's tender hand
[illegible] to clasp a well-used brand,
[illegible]leeps in quiet rust at last,—
him of the echoing past,

What time the gallant Moorish race
Made Christian Spain their dwelling-place,
But Spain could never be the slave
Of stranger hosts, however brave,
And how this steel had helped to free
Her soil from turbaned Paynimrie.

The world has had its childly days,
Passion-bred hopes and earnest plays,—
The world has had its manhood fraught
With power and war and holy thought,—
The world is now grown vain and old,
Her head and heart are palsy-cold,—
Light was called to meet her prime,
Thunder waits on her eve-time,
With a light that is not light,
But a death-glare ghastly bright.
And a voice is every where
Louder than thousand trumpets' blare,
" Hear it, ye mortals, every one,
The life from out your world is gone."

So murmurs many a soul sublime,
Engaoled in this unhealthy time,
Whose embryo-thoughts and half-desires
Feed not his heart's sky-seeking fires ;
Who scales all heights, and with sharp ken
Observes the policies of men,

Their aims and objects, and can see,
However wide the horizon be,
No onward-leading knightly road,
Such as his ancient heroes trode,—
No one secure and honest way
Where he can travel night and day,—
But every moment full of fear,
Of Truth forgot and Error near:
He dare not mingle in that maze,
He dare not front the doubtful haze,—
He dare not,—as he would keep whole
His virgin rectitude of soul,
As he holds dear his life to be
His claim to blest Eternity!
And thus, with all his loving mind,
He stands at bay against his kind,
Half sad to see amidst the blind.

Is there no refuge but the tomb
For all this timeless spirit-bloom?
Does earth no other prospect yield
But one broad barren battle-field?
Or if there be some cradling spot
Where such grown evil enters not,
Lies it in countries far away
From where he first drank in the day?
Where, if despairing he be driven,
He must renounce his native heaven,

No more by olden ties be bound,
Take other dress, and let the sound
Of native and of neighbour speech
No more his aliened senses reach!

Be it not so! for thou art here,
O Island beautifully drear!
For Thou, encountering such a guest,
Wilt clasp him to thy hardy breast,
And bid him dwell at peace with thee
In thy uncitied modesty;
Let him his spirit slake and steep
In thy immense Atlantic deep.
Let him from thy rude nature gain
Some sturdy fortune to sustain
The burthen of ideal care,
To which the Poet's soul is heir.

THE ENVOY.

TO ———.

BELOVED, close this weary-wandering book,
Let us forget it ever held a line,
Let me repose upon thy loving look,
For I am thine again,—nothing but Thine.

For sights half-seen, and thoughts half-followed out,
And feeble memories, how can I repine?
Having one bliss, on which I dare not doubt,—
For I am thine again,—nothing but Thine.

Or if my Spirit has learnt some things aright,
Nor toiled in vain within the Past's rich mine,
It is, that it may take a nobler flight,
And worthier to be thine,—nothing but Thine.

Thy presence is the homestead of my heart,
My own true country, my familiar shrine,
I know no other world than what thou art,
Since I am thine again,—nothing but Thine.

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